# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN LOUISIANA, 1805-1861

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# PREFACE

Reconstruction of the past is a never-ending dialogue with the present. Writers twenty years ago selected facts and subject matter and interpreted them from their vantage point, but in a new day the points of view change and new interpretations become necessary. Likewise new facts and data provided by recent discoveries of sources demand a new ordering of materials according to the demand of a new age.

The founding of the Episcopal Church in the newly-acquired Orleans Territory and its subsequent development in the State of Louisiana is a part of the social and religious history of Louisiana and American history. In it are reflected not only the growth of an institution, but the attitudes of the leaders and people of that institution toward the social, economic, and political problems of the day.

The bare facts of that story were sketched in 1888 by the Reverend Dr. Herman Cope Duncan in _The Diocese of Louisiana, 1805-1888_ (New Orleans, 1888), and elaborated somewhat in a more recent undocumented work by Hodding Carter and Betty W. Carter called _So Great a Good, A History of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana and of Christ Church Cathedral, 1805-1955_ (Sewanee, 1955). Since the publication of these books new records have been discovered and others not previously known or used have provided a means of bridging critical gaps in the former works and reinterpreting the entire story. Special chapters in this present study have been given to the place of the Negro in the ante-bellum church, to education, and to work among seamen and French-speaking citizens. An interpretation is also offered of the bishop's reaction to the secession of Louisiana which made the diocese independent of the National Episcopal Church.

No problem existed in selecting a beginning date since the movement to establish an Episcopal Church in New Orleans took place in 1805 with a meeting of interested persons. The year 1861 was selected as a terminal point because in that year the bishop gave his diocese independent status, and left to serve in the Confederate Army with the consequent collapse of diocesan life.

Emphasis in this work is given to the evolution of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana to full diocesan status under its first bishop. It is not a biography of Leonidas Polk, although as Bishop of Louisiana, he was the center around which diocesan life developed from 1841 to 1861.

# ABSTRACT

Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase a group of New Orleans citizens formed an English-speaking church naming it Christ Church. The Reverend Philander Chase came from New York in 1805 by vote of the people and he made Christ Church an Episcopal Church, the first in the Mississippi Valley. The Right Reverend Thomas C. Brownell, of Connecticut, made several visits to Louisiana and made efforts to establish a diocese but the effort failed. In 1838 clergy and laity of the three Episcopal Churches succeeded in founding a diocesan structure and were given episcopal oversight of the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk, who was then Bishop of Arkansas.

Bishop Polk made three extensive tours of Louisiana before devoting his full energies to the diocese from 1841-1861 as Bishop of Louisiana. In his first convention address he revealed his theological views and programs upon which he built for the next twenty years. His efforts were rewarded by expansion of new parishes into every area of Louisiana. Special ministries were directed to seamen in the Port of New Orleans and to the French-speaking citizens of that city.

Bishop Polk called upon the diocese to give special emphasis to the task of education and asked that every parish have a day school for the education of the church's children.

The state education system was unsatisfactory, hence a real need existed for good schools. A number of such schools were established and functioned for varying periods of time. The bishop's interest in education led him ultimately to organize his Southern brother bishops in a cooperative effort which resulted in the founding of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee.

The Negro was also a major concern for Bishop Polk. He ministered to the slaves on his own plantation while calling upon the clergy and laity in the diocese to take the advantage of every opportunity to do the same. Negroes attended most of the parishes of the diocese, and there were in addition approximately thirty plantation chapels reported by the clergy. Polk, himself a large slaveholder, may have believed in gradual emancipation but this is not clear from his action.

Political events in late 1860 and early 1861 reached the point of national division, when Louisiana, along with other slaveholding states, passed an act of secession on January 26, 1861. Bishop Polk's response was to declare the diocese independent of the national Episcopal Church because he interpreted ancient Catholic doctrine as teaching that churches should follow states in their organizational structure. He then proceeded to make such changes in the liturgy as were necessary to allow for prayers for the Louisiana and Confederate governments rather than that of the United States.

In the summer of 1861, Bishop Polk, a West Point graduate, was offered a commission as Lieutenant General in the Confederate Army by President Davis. Since diocesan life had developed around Polk, with his absence the diocese, as such, ceased to function. Some parishes continued their works providing a nucleus for a revived diocese after the War.

# CHAPTER I

## FIRST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ORLEANS TERRITORY

The citizens of Louisiana were allowed freedom of religion for the first time when Louisiana became a territorial possession of the United States by treaty with France on April 30, 1803. It was only after this time that Anglican, Protestant, and other non-Roman Churches were allowed the free and public exercise of worship according to their principles.[1]

The exploration and settlement of the lower Mississippi Valley had a long and rich history prior to the Louisiana Purchase. Before the arrival of Europeans the present State of Louisiana was inhabited by approximately 13,000 Indians made up of six language groups: Caddo, Tunica, Natchez, Atakapa, Chitimacha, and Muskogee which have left their heritage, among numerous other place names, with the name of a parish (Caddo), of a city (Natchez) and of a group of hills in West Feliciana (Tunicia).[2]

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[1] Henry E. Chambers, A History of Louisiana (3 vols.; Chicago and New York, 1925), I, 461.

[2] Fred B. Kniffen, The Indians of Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1965), 51.

The first known white men to come to Louisiana were those in the ill-fated expedition of Hernando DeSoto the Spaniard during the period of 1535-1542. DeSoto had twenty-two ecclesiastics with him, but neither he nor they left any permanent settlement or effect in the area.[3] One hundred and forty years passed before white men again came to Louisiana and the lower Mississippi River Valley when the first French exploration came in 1682.

France had established a colony in Canada in 1608, and for decades French priests and trappers pushed down via the waterways from Canada to trade with the Indians and to save their souls. By 1673 the trapper Louis Jolliet and Pére Jacques Marquette had explored the Mississippi River as far south as Arkansas. The heir to their work was Rene Robert Cavelier, le Sieur de la Salle who proposed to establish a colony on the Gulf Coast thereby securing control of the entire Mississippi Valley to the French.[4] La Salle who was recommended to the French minister Jean Baptiste Colbert by the Canadian governor Louis de Buade, Count of Frontenac, persuaded Colbert to finance his venture. With an exploring party of twenty-three Frenchmen and eighteen Indians, La Salle followed the Mississippi River to its mouth, arriving there on April 9, 1682. After planting a cross and chanting the Te Deum, the Exaudiat, and the Domine Salvum fac regem, La Salle took possession of the vast territory in the name of his patron and monarch, Louis XIV.[5]

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[3] Chambers, Louisiana, 18-23. See also: Henry Rightor, Standard History of New Orleans (Chicago, 1961), 280.

[4] Edwin A. Davis, Louisiana, A Narrative History (Baton Rouge, 1961), 28.

Seventeen years later the French made another effort to settle the Gulf Coast. Under Pierre le Moyne, le Sieur d'Iberville and his brother Jean Baptiste, le Moyne, le Sieur de Bienville an expedition sailed from Ship Island in the Gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Mississippi River in March of 1699. Pére Anastase Doudy who had been with La Salle chanted the Te Deum in thanksgiving.[6] Bienville founded the city of New Orleans in 1718 and established it as the capital of the Louisiana colony.[7] Its unique location as a point some miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico gave it protection and also placed it at a vital site to guard the river, as well as traffic to the river, via Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain.[8] This splendid geographic location gave the city an important political and commercial potential because it could control the river and the entire Mississippi Valley.

Louisiana remained a French or Spanish colony for 180 years. During this time the French settled in New Orleans and in the surrounding areas along the streams and bayous;

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[5] Ibid., 29.

[6] Ibid., 70.

[7] Ibid., 55.

[8] John Smith Kendall, History of New Orleans (3 vols.; Chicago and New York, 1922), I, 5.

the colony's other inhabitants (some Germans and other Europeans who had been lured to Louisiana under John Law's scheme, Indians, Negroes, and persons of mixed blood), all came under the French system of government, law, language, and the Roman Catholic religion. The Church of Rome was the only ecclesiastical body allowed to function in Louisiana, and it was supported by the government,[9] although there were numerous Protestant inhabitants.

In 1762 France ceded Louisiana to Spain as compensation for her entrance into the Seven Years War. Although Louisiana was a Spanish colony, its culture and customs remained essentially French and the Roman Church remained the established church and only the practice of the faith according to the Roman rite was permitted.[10] Nevertheless, ideas of religious freedom and toleration were beginning to stir.

During the later years of Spanish rule, Americans came in increasing numbers to southeast Louisiana and to New Orleans.[11] As a result of increasing population up river this port city had become the chief outlet for the goods of the entire upper Mississippi Valley and the western or trans-Allegheny settlements of Americans. In the Treaty of San

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[9] Davis, Narrative History, 97.

[10] Amos Stoddard, Sketches Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana (Philadelphia, 1812), 314.

[11] Chambers, Louisiana, 393.

Lorenzo (Pinckney's Treaty) a temporary solution was found to the difficulties between the United States and Spain over the navigation of the Mississippi River and boundary matters. The United States got a three-year right to free navigation of the river and deposit of goods at Spanish New Orleans. This "right of deposit" permitted Americans of Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and western Pennsylvania to float their wares down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans where they were loaded on ocean-going vessels for transportation to the East Coast and Europe.[12] This arrangement was threatened by transfer. By the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso of October 1, 1800, France again became the owner of Louisiana in the midst of the "undeclared War" between the United States and France. President Thomas Jefferson learned of this transfer in 1801 and feared, among other things, that France would close New Orleans and the Mississippi River to American vessels. His fears were realized on October 16, 1802, when the Spanish intendant at New Orleans interdicted the right of deposit to Americans. President Jefferson instructed Robert R. Livingston, the American minister to France to negotiate for a tract of land on the lower Mississippi for a port or at least for the right of deposit. This action led to the purchase of the entire

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[12] Elijah Wilson Lyons, Louisiana in French Diplomacy, 1759-1803 (Norman, 1943), *passim*.

Louisiana colony for $15,000,000 from France.[13]

American citizens began to come to the Louisiana colony in considerable numbers before it became a part of the United States. Most of these newcomers were Anglo-Saxon in racial origin and "Protestant" in religious preference if, indeed, they expressed the latter. Some came on the flatboats and keelboats of the day and some overland and many, but not all, of them were a tough, crude, unpolished lot. They gave the distinct impression to the European society of New Orleans that Americans in general were an inferior class of people. Although other Americans who came to establish business and residence seemed more refined, they were definitely "foreign" to the Orleanians in culture and religion.[14] Many adapted to this new culture and fitted in very well.

When William Charles Cole Claiborne became governor of the Territory of Orleans, December 20, 1803, one of the most critical problems he faced was the division in the populace resulting from this contrast of cultures. The colonial Creole and the newer American faced each other with basically different cultural outlooks which did not approach a working relationship until they were united in the Battle of New Orleans some twelve years later. The law of old

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[13] Chambers, Louisiana, 37.

[14] Davis, Narrative History, 141-42.

Louisiana was French-Spanish statutory law; United States law was English common law. The racial origin of the Louisianians was Gallic and Latin; the American's was Anglo-Saxon. The Creole was European or local in loyalty; the American was intensely nationalistic and devoted to his young republic. The spiritual ideals of the Louisianian were basically of the Papal Catholic type and anti-Protestant; the American was distinctly an individualistic Protestant and generally anti-Papal. Consequently, Governor Claiborne faced the problem of incorporating a foreign colony and culture into the American nation with its democratic ideals, and with one of its primary guarantees: freedom of religion.[15]

It was suitable, then, that the Episcopal Church should be the first group to take advantage of the opportunity to minister to her own in the Louisiana colony, for among those churches separated from the great Roman Communion there is none which is more Catholic in her liturgy, sacraments, history or practice. She had never compromised her Catholic inheritance derived from her continuity with the primitive undivided Catholic Church through apostolic succession. Neither had she made any apologies for her Reformation inheritance of *Sola Scriptura* and freedom of conscience. The Episcopal Church as a part of the Anglican Communion is in a unique sense both Catholic and Protestant, and it was to her that these Protestants residing in a Roman Catholic culture looked for spiritual nurture.[16]

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[15] *The Constitution of the United States of America*, Amendment 1.

In 1803 there were only two churches in New Orleans, St. Louis Cathedral and the Chapel of the Ursuline Nuns, both of which had been associated with the city for nearly one hundred years. The outward manifestations or practice of any religion but the Roman Catholic was expressly forbidden by law of Spain and France but there were instances throughout the Colony of the private practice of other faiths. During the colonial period there were only a few Americans in New Orleans, but after the purchase they came in increasing numbers but the majority of the population remained adherents of the Roman Church.[17] Yet the Roman Church had no bishop for the entire area of Louisiana from 1802 until 1805.

During this interim when episcopal supervision was entirely lacking an incident occurred at St. Louis Cathedral which is indicative of the Gallic attitude toward authority; an attitude not unlike that of the protestant Americans. The beloved Cathedral pastor, Pére Antoine, was replaced at his post by a newcomer priest, one Father Walsh. Since there was no bishop near or far to whom they could appeal, the people held an election on March 19, 1805, and by a vote of

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[16] Powell Mills Dawley, The Episcopal Church and Its Work (Greenwich, 1955), 3-14.

[17] Albert Emile Fossier, New Orleans, The Glamour Period, 1800-1840 (New Orleans, 1957), 294.

4,000 to 0 named Pére Antoine pastor of St. Louis Cathedral. This unusual congregational usurpation of episcopal prerogative was sanctioned by the Bishop of Baltimore on September 1, 1805, when he assumed oversight of the New Orleans area. In his action Father Walsh was recalled by the authorities and Pére Antoine was formally reinstated as Cathedral pastor.[18] Perhaps this victorious display of lay power within the Roman Church was a foreshadowing of soon-to-be American liberty. Perhaps, also, it prompted the group of Americans to organize an English-speaking church. At any rate, the first organized movement to establish a parish church of a non-Latin communion was initiated at this time.

There had been only scattered incidents in which non-Roman clergymen exercised their ministry in Louisiana prior to the Purchase. Joseph Willis, a mulatto, had preached to a group of Baptists in 1792. In the same year, the Reverend James Cloud, an Episcopal priest, had ministered the sacraments to Anglicans and was expelled by the Spanish. The itinerant Methodist, Elisha Bowman, who preached with some regularity at Opelousas, came to New Orleans from time to time, and presumably he exercised his ministerial prerogatives.[19] The erratic fundamentalist Lorenzo Dow was busy preaching in Atakapa country but there is no record of his establishing a church in the territory.[20] It must be emphasized that these were only occasional ministrations by itinerant clergy and there is no record of any attempt to organize a worshiping congregation of non-Roman Christians prior to 1805.

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[18] Ibid., 310.

[19] Kendall, New Orleans, 28.

This view is substantiated by a description of the state of religion among the English-speaking citizens of New Orleans, and a plea for change is thus indicated:

> A variety of religious tenets are professed among the English Americans. . . . They exhibit a mixture of baptists, methodists, calvinists, and episcopalians. They are not formed into religious societies, and the law makes no provision for the support of teachers, nor indeed any teacher attached to any village or settlement. Those who occasionally expiate on the truths of revelation in a public manner, are mere itinerants, and it is unfortunate that more do not exercise this sacred office.[21]

In April, 1805, Governor Claiborne was busy with the domestic problems of his new American territory. While attempting to educate the Creoles to the workings of democracy, he assured the Americans of their right to worship according to their traditions by approving an act of incorporation for the first non-Roman Church in the Mississippi Valley. This event marks the beginning of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana.[22]

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[20] Rightor, Standard History, 494.

[21] Stoddard, Sketches, 313.

[22] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church, New Orleans, April 10, 1805. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

The charter was drawn up at a meeting of the interested group and presented to the Legislative Council of the Territory of Orleans in June of 1805.[23] Since this was the first charter of a parish church in the territory and since it would become the model of all other charters for parish churches it should be examined in some detail. The charter is found in its original form in the Acts of the Legislative Council of Orleans Territory, 1-2 Sess., 1804-05[24] in both English and in French. It was entitled "an act for incorporating a congregation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the County of Orleans, and for other purposes therein mentioned" and dated July 3, 1805.

Section I bound certain persons named in the act and "other free white persons of the age of twenty-one years, who shall contribute not less than ten dollars per annum for the support and maintenance" into a corporate body. The persons named were: J. B. Prevost, Joseph M'Neal, Richard Relf, Benjamin Morgan, Robert Dow, Ja's Brown, Joseph Saul, William Kenner, William Brown, John Watkins, Evan Jones, George T. Phillips, William Harper, Richard Butler, William G. Garland, James M. Bradford, R. D. Shepherd, George T. Ross, Charles Norwood, Waters Clarke, James C. Williamson,

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[23] Vestry Minutes, April 10, 1805.

[24] Acts of the Legislative Council of Orleans Territory, 1-2 Sess., 1804-05, 88-95. Also L. Moreau Lislet, A General Digest of the Acts of the Legislature of Louisiana: Passed from the year 1804, to 1827, Inclusive (New Orleans, 1828), 166.

Charles Patton, Thomas M'Cormick, John F. Watson, Edward Livingston, William E. Smith, John Poultney, John P. Sanderson, Henry A. Heins, Samuel D. Earle, John M'Donough, Andrew Burk, John Palfrey, George W. Morgan, Abraham R. Ellery, Thomas L. Harman, James Proffit, James Martin, Thomas Callender, William Donaldson, and Hugh Pollock. The legal title given to that body politic was "The Church Wardens and Vestrymen of Christ Church, in the county of Orleans" with the legal rights of a corporate body. For some unknown reason the church's income was limited in the charter to the sum of twenty thousand dollars per year. Section I also detailed the rights of the church to purchase, hold and dispose of the various legal kinds of property. The corporate body was further given the right to legal proceedings as a person in law courts, make laws for its own governance and exercise its business as necessary.

Section II set up a Vestry of fifteen members, two of whom were to be Wardens, all of whom were to be elected annually on the first Monday in May by a majority of the members of the corporation. Section III gave the Vestry "full power to appoint a minister" and to elect wardens and a treasurer annually. Sections IV and V provided for continuance of the corporation in the event an election failed to take place. This was a relatively simple charter with certain differences which were to be amended at the insistence of the first priest.

The movement to start an English-speaking church in New Orleans had actually been initiated by John Watson, who had come to Louisiana only eleven months before, and yet who referred to himself as a "long resident of New Orleans."[25] Watson was a devout Christian trained in the habit of regular worship. The absence of a house of worship bothered him, and he apparently felt that it concerned others of similar persuasion. In an article entitled, "For the Religious and Moral Readers of the Protestant Persuasion," which appeared on the above-mentioned date in the New Orleans Louisiana Gazette,[26] He addressed himself to those other English-speaking citizens of New Orleans. After bemoaning the neglect of corporate worship by the Americans in New Orleans, he asked: "Which of us remembers hearing a sermon in English?" Perhaps they did hear sermons in French at the Roman Church but the desire for more familiar forms of divine liturgy required an effort at organization for their provision. Since the English-speaking citizens of the city came from a variety of Christian communions and none seemed strong enough to provide for separate worship, Watson suggested that all of the English-speaking citizens join together to establish a single church in New Orleans. He indicated no particular denomination but called for one which was generally "Protestant," which in its large sense meant simply non-Papal.[27]

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[25] Philander Chase to Christ Church Vestry, New Orleans, November 23, 1805. Manuscript in possession of author.

[26] Louisiana Gazette, June 7, 1808.

The response to this suggestion was immediate and encouraging, and on May 28, 1805, a second notice appeared in the *Gazette*:

> It is with peculiar pleasure we witness the happy effect upon the subject in our paper on the 30th, and since then, the laudable efforts of the writer have been aided and encouraged by the sentiments of some writers in the *Orleans Gazette*, now we have the pleasure of announcing to our fellow citizens of the Protestant Persuasion, that we are likely to succeed in the establishment of an English Church. They are invited to meet for this purpose at Francisqui's Ballroom at 8 o'clock on Thursday next.[28]

In this suggestion and the response to it we see that the real beginning of the Church in Louisiana came with the initiative of one man, John Watson, and the support of the group who met at Francisqui's Ballroom. At that meeting a series of resolutions was passed which accelerated the movement for a Protestant church in New Orleans. The group resolved that a need did exist for the proposed church, and that "a clergyman of the Protestant persuasion" should be invited to reside in New Orleans. They determined to keep the pace of the movement by setting the time for future meetings.[29]

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[27] Georgiana Fairbanks Taylor, "The Early History of the Episcopal Church in New Orleans, 1805-1840," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXII, No. 2 (April, 1939), 8.

[28] *Louisiana Gazette*, May 31, 1805.

[29] Vestry Minutes, 1805.

June second was selected as the next appointed time for the group to assemble at the home of Madame Forager, 227 Bourbon Street. This was only eighteen months subsequent to the Louisiana Purchase, before which time such a gathering would have been unlikely, if not impossible. At this second meeting Benjamin Morgan acted as chairman and James Bradford as clerk. They again agreed that the first step would be "to obtain as speedily as possible a Protestant clergyman . . .," and, to that end a committee, including Edward Livingston who was a former New Yorker and prominent in Louisiana legal history, was named to correspond with church authorities in the East for a suitable clergyman. Support for the cleric and a place for public services were the other two pieces of business considered. An appropriate committee, including the philantropist John McDonough, was appointed to raise funds and select a site for the future church.[30]

Churches were considered civil corporations for legal purposes, and for the new congregation to exist in Louisiana it had to be incorporated. To that end, the assembly appointed another committee to write an act of incorporation and present it to the Legislative Council of the Orleans Territory.[31]

At the same meeting Abner L. Duncan, James Alexander,

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[30] Vestry Minutes, 1805.

[31] Vestry Minutes, 1805.

James Workman, and George W. Morgan were appointed as a committee with the double purpose of finding a suitable place for corporate worship and petitioning the Legislative Council of the Territory for an act of incorporation. Again a notice appeared in the Gazette that subscriptions would be received by Messrs. Hugh Pollock, Richard Rolf, and John McDonough for the English Church.[32] This was followed by a third weekly meeting held at Madame Forager's on June 9th. Hugh Pollock reported that subscriptions totaled $2,275, which could assure the clergyman a minimum salary of $2,000, ample at that time.[33] A fourth meeting was called for the following Sunday, June 16, 1805, "to determine the religious denomination of the clergyman who may be called."[34]

The subscribers, having assembled agreeable to notice,

> . . . they proceeded to the choice of a denomination from which a minister should be invited to come and settle amongst us, whom it was found that the votes stood thus:
>
> For an Episcopalian, 45
> For a Presbyterian, 7
> For a Methodist, 1
>
> Whereupon it was resolved that it is the wish of the Protestant citizens of New Orleans that an Episcopal clergyman be invited to come and settle amongst us.
>
> Resolved, that the corresponding committee be instructed to conform themselves accordingly.
>
> Resolved, Unanimously, That the Church to be

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[32] Louisiana Gazette, June 7, 1808.

[33] Vestry Minutes, June 9, 1805.

[34] Vestry Minutes, June 16, 1805.

> erected be called and known by the name of Christ's Church.
>
> Adjourned.[35]

Thus, the vote was overwhelming for the selection of an Episcopal priest to come and found a church in New Orleans, but not all of those who voted were members of the Anglican Communion. Those who were Episcopalians evidently convinced the others that the Episcopal Church was the logical choice because of its Evangelical Catholic nature and because it could minister in more diverse ways than could some of the more narrow sectarian groups. At any rate, the Episcopal Church got its start in Louisiana and in the Mississippi Valley by the most characteristic of the democratic processes. The group of 53 Americans were able to agree on the Episcopal Church.

The New Orleans Directory shortly thereafter published the names of the group:

| | |
|---|---|
| Benjamin Morgan | 14 Rue Gravier |
| James M. Bradford | |
| Hugh Pollock | 7 Rue St. Philips |
| Joseph McNeil | 75 Rue Royals S. |
| Richard Relf | 16 Rue de Bourbone S. |
| John McDonough | |
| James Brown | |
| John F. Watson | |
| Regin D. Sheppherd | |
| John M. Provost | |
| James C. Williamson | |
| Edward Livingston | 22 Rue de Conti |
| Joseph Saul | |
| Abraham R. Ellory | |
| George W. Morgan | 35 Rue de Chartres |

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[35] Louisiana Gazette, June 18, 1805.

| | |
|---|---|
| James Alexander | |
| William Broron | 44 Rue de Magasin |
| Philip Jones | |
| George T. Ross | 17 Rue Poydras |
| Charles Norwood | 36 Rue Bienville |
| Walters Clark | |
| Charles Patton | |
| Andrew Burk | 11 Levee N. |
| William D. Smith | |
| William Donaldson | 40 Rue de Conti |
| James Martin | 5 Rue St. Louis |
| John Poultney, Jr. & Co. | 15 Rue Royale S. |
| John B. Sanderson | 40 Rue St. Pierre |
| Thomas McCornish | 57 Rue St. Louis |
| John W. Sorley (Furley) | 17 Rue St. Louis |
| Alexander Milne, Jr. | 35 Rue de Conti |
| Evans Jones | 44 Rue de Magosin |
| John Jay | |
| W. Brooks | |
| Ebenezer Bradish | |
| Elepholet Brown | |
| Jean B. Prevost | |
| Dominic Hall | |
| William Kenner | 17 Rue Bienville.[36] |

A survey of this list indicates that less than half of the petitioners were established residents; only a dozen or so had families and slaves. The others probably were newcomers to the city who had not had time to establish residency. Many of these signers were later to become leaders in their fields and several gained international prominence.[37] William Brown, Evan Jones, George A. Morgan, John W. Sorley, and Hugh Pollock were members of the first Legislative Council of the Territory of Orleans. John B. Prevost was judge of the Superior Court. William Donaldson became the founder of Donaldsonville, some miles up the river from

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[36] New Orleans Directory, 1805.

[37] Taylor, "Early History," 8.

New Orleans. Edward Livingston, who was then practicing law in New Orleans, was later to become a United States Senator from Louisiana, Secretary of State in President Andrew Jackson's administration, and Minister Plenipotentiary to France. John McDonough later endowed the school system of New Orleans and Baltimore and is known by every school child in New Orleans. Alexander Milne, Jr., was the son of another famous philantrophist for whom the community of Milneburg on Lake Pontchartrain is named. James Brown bought a plantation for $16,000 and ultimately became a United States Senator from Louisiana. James Martin practiced medicine. Richard Relf was Secretary of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, cashier of the Louisiana State Bank, and a member of the Board of Charity Hospital. John Poultney and Evan Jones were merchants. Benjamin Morgan led the movement to pave New Orleans' streets. James Bradford edited the Gazette. Joseph Saul, Joseph McNeil and John A. Sorley were connected with the Bank of the United States.[38] This was a group composed of the future leaders of the American citizenry of New Orleans.

The first organized non-Roman Church in Louisiana did not come to New Orleans by way of a missionary effort of the Episcopal Church or any other religious body. It was a spontaneous movement growing out of a need felt by a group of local people. Since they asked for a priest to be sent, it was clear from the beginning that the financial support must be local. This point is made in the letter written to Bishop Benjamin Moore of New York, on August 12, 1805, by representatives of the group:

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[38] Ibid., 10.

> Sir: We have been instructed by the Protestant citizens of this place, to lay before you the substance of the resolutions entered into of the several meetings for the purpose of encouraging the establishment of a Church in this city, and to interest you in the recommendation of such a person as you may think qualified to maintain the respectibility of the Church, and as a minister of the Gospel, to conciliate the regard of his congregation.
>
> It has been determined that he shall be of the Episcopal denomination, but it is to be recollected that his supporters are not only of his persuasion, but also Presbyterian, (Roman) Catholic, etc.
>
> From the resolution of the last meeting, we are authorized to say that our subscription for the annual expense of the Church, amounts upwards of two thousand, seven hundred dollars, with a probability of a considerable addition in consequence of the liberality we have experienced, the unanimity which seems to avail on the subject, with the great desire manifested by every class of people to our object carried into effect, we may declare that a salary of no less than two thousand dollars will be given as compensation of such a person who may be chosen to reside among us.
>
> We presume the objects we have in view would be sufficient to recommend our interest to your attention; but the acknowledgment of the congregation will be your due, if you will be so good as to point out such suitable character, as are within your knowledge, to correspond for this purpose with such gentlemen as you may deem proper.
>
> We beg leave to request your early attention, and to hear from you as soon as convenient. We are, sir, with much respect, your humble servants,
>
> James M. Bradford<br>
> James C. Williamson<br>
> Edward Livingston.[39]

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[39] Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences: An Autobiography (2 vols.; Boston, 1848), I, 56-57.

# CHAPTER II

# PHILANDER CHASE, FIRST RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH

The letter from Bradford, Williamson, and Livingston greatly interested Bishop Moore but his capacity to respond to their request was limited. The Episcopal Church had been organized as an autonomous national church only sixteen years earlier and in 1805 it was still weak. The mother Church of England which had come to North America in the sixteenth century with English explorers and was planted at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, and existed in all of the colonies on the eve of the American Revolution. During this entire period of one hundred and seventy years the Church of England in the colonies remained in the awkward position of being governed by bishops but having no bishop in residence. Proposals were made to send bishops, and, although there was approval of the idea in some colonial quarters, there was violent resistance in others. Probably the chief reason for the English Church's failure to send bishops to the colonies was its inherent conservatism which prevented it from developing a colonial policy allowing for the episcopate to function differently from that in England.

An English bishop was also a lord who exercised temporal as well as spiritual powers, and the only way he could have gained entrance to a dissenting colony was by riding a cannon. Even in colonies where the Church of England was established, the colonists were not eager to have bishops as temporal lords.[1] Compromises were suggested by some forward-looking and flexible churchmen whereby the bishop's ecclesiastical functions could be separated from his political powers, but the conservatism of the House of Lords and the hatred of certain colonists for bishops combined to prevent execution of the plan.[2] The best that could be done for the Colonial Church was to place it under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London and send priests called "Commissaries" as his representative.[3]

The American Revolution had disastrous effects on the Church of England in the American colonies. Approximately two-thirds of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Anglicans, but many other Anglicans, especially those in "dissenter" areas, were staunch loyalists. Most colonial missionaries were sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel with headquarters in England, and they, too, were loyalists. Revolutionaries forced most of the New England clergy, regardless of their political views, to flee the country. In the South much church property was confiscated by the new government. The Revolution left the Church of England with a great prejudice against her in some quarters, with sharply decreased land holdings, and with many of its remaining clergy and laity suspects.[4]

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[1] William Wilson Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1950), 156.

[2] Ibid., 161.

[3] Ibid., 46.

During the critical years 1780-89, the Anglican Church settled most of its major problems. Under the leadership of the Reverend Willian White of Pennsylvania a constitution was written for the American Church as an autonomous body similar to the bicameral American Congress. The clergy and laity in each colony had long been established as bishopless dioceses which came together to form a national church whose chief authoritative and legislative body was called the "General Convention."[5] This body consisted of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. The Deputies was shared equally by priests and lay representatives of each diocese.[6]

The name chosen for the independent American branch of Anglicanism was "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the

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[4] *Ibid.*, 182.

[5] The "General Convention" is the national governing body of the Episcopal Church. It meets triennially to formulate policy, receive and act upon reports, and make appropriations for the mission of the Church. It is a bicameral legislative body; all bishops compose the House of Bishops. The House of Deputies is equally divided between clerical and lay members elected by the various dioceses. The diocese has an annual meeting and is called "Diocesean Convention" or "Diocesan Council."

[6] Manross, *American Episcopal Church*, 190.

United States of America," the words "Protestant" meaning non-Roman and "Episcopal" signifying government by bishops. ("Protestant" has recently been dropped.) This church declared its intention to continue in communion with the Church of England, and faithful to its doctrine, discipline, and worship.[7] The founding fathers declared that they would be loyal to the Catholic Creeds, Sacraments and Ministry and that the church would be free of State control.[8]

The anamoly of an Episcopal Church without bishops disappeared when Samuel Seabury, a priest of the diocese of Connecticut, was consecrated to the episcopate in 1784 by Bishops Kilgour, Petrie, and Skinner in Scotland.[9] Other bishops were consecrated in England for New York and Pennsylvania.

The clergy and laity gathered in 1785 and 1789 to put the proposed new ecclesiastical machinery to the test by revising English usages for the American Church. The result was an American Prayer Book in 1789, and with it the Episcopal Church began to function as an independent branch of the Anglican Communion in America.

Growth was slow and in the first decades of its independent life the church tried to recover its losses suffered in the Revolution. In 1805 little real headway had been made, and yet there was an imperative known to all churchmen, namely, to expand or die. Bishop Moore of New York was keenly aware of the Apostolic decree "to go into all nations preaching the Gospel."[10] Although the Episcopal Church had not yet developed either missionary program or organization, the Bishop of New York saw in the letter from the gentlemen in the new American Territory of Orleans an opportunity to carry out the missionary imperative. A young priest of Poughkeepsie seemed a promising candidate for the job. His name was Philander Chase and he later described his call:

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[7] *The Book of Common Prayer*, v-vi.

[8] Manross, *American Episcopal Church*, 192.

[9] *Ibid.*, 194.

> In the year 1805, the Bishop of New York, having been appraised (sic) of his wishes, and having received from New Orleans the invitation of the Protestants in the place to send them a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, appointed the writer to go thither, and see what could be effected in the permanent organization of the church in that city, there with the whole Territory, just added to the United States.[11]

Here was an opportunity to bring the Gospel and Sacraments and the heritage of the Anglican Communion not only to a small group of English-speaking citizens of New Orleans, but to an entirely new territory of the United States. Philander Chase was a convert to the Episcopal Church from Congregationalism and was filled with the fire of his new-found faith which is so often characteristic of a convert. Added to this conviction and his desire to extend the work of the church to a new frontier was the fact that he needed to move his wife to a warmer climate for her health's sake.[12]

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[10] St. Matthew 28:19.

[11] Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences: An Autobiography (2 vols.; Boston, 1848), I, 54.

Chase was the youngest of a New Hampshire farm family of fifteen. He was seven months old at the outbreak of the American Revolution and grew from infancy with the young Republic.[13] His family were devout Congregationalists, and when each of the four elder sons entered Dartmouth College, the parents' wish was that one of them would choose the ministry as a vocation, but they were disappointed each time.[14] Philander was the youngest, and he was content to remain with his aging parents. However, at the age of fifteen, after he had suffered two serious accidents, his parents convinced him that this was Providence's way of showing him that his vocation was not farming.

Leaving the farm, he entered Dartmouth in 1791, and, while in his junior year chanced upon a copy of the _Book of Common Prayer_. In this book he saw what seemed to be the rightful heir of the undivided Catholic Church. The liturgy appealed to his sense of order, and the Episcopal Constitution of the church conformed to his understanding of apostolic government as reflected in biblical and church history. He found in the Episcopal Church a reasonable form of the Christian Faith, and became a convert.[15] He later succeeded in bringing his entire family into the fold of the Apostolic Church, and remained a staunch and faithful adherent to the faith throughout his life.

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[12] _Ibid_., 57.

[13] _Ibid_.

[14] _Ibid_., 75.

[15] _Ibid_., 10.

In 1799, Philander Chase was ordained to the priesthood and ministered to the flocks at Poughkeepsie and Fiskhill, New York. In addition to his priestly duties, he taught school as supplementary support for his family and wife who was consumptive. Because of his wife's condition he petitioned Bishop Moore for a move to a warmer climate as soon as possible, and the bishop contacted him immediately when the letter from New Orleans came.[16] Chase determined to leave for Louisiana at once. Because he was uncertain of the living conditions for his family in New Orleans and the amount of the stipend, he decided to leave his wife and two sons with relatives and make the initial trip to New Orleans alone.[17]

He later wrote of his departure: "In the month of October, in the year 1805, I set sail on the brig Thetis, Captain Richard Bowen." This was the young priest's first sea voyage, and he suffered from seasickness most of the journey, but Captain Bowen showed him many kindnesses, and much consideration which were of great comfort to him.[18] The Thetis entered the Mississippi River in November, 1805, sailing slowly up the muddy river as winds were favorable. Nearing his destination, the young missionary became more impatient to touch land, and when his ship stopped at English Turn below the city, "he disembarked with his friend W. D. and walked ten miles to the plantation of B. P. (John B. Prevost) the Judge of the newly ceded city of New Orleans. He arrived in New Orleans on Wednesday, November 13, 1805."[19]

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[16] *Ibid*., 12.

[17] *Ibid*., 57.

[18] *Ibid*., 54.

The Louisiana Gazette, published by William Brodford, carried a notice on November 15 that the newly-arrived priest would conduct his first service in New Orleans at the Principal (Cabildo), Sunday, November 17, at 11:00 A.M.[20] The notice stated also that the group would meet at the home of Madame Forager on November 16th in order to meet their new clergyman. In accordance with this notice the first general meeting under the charter was held on that date.[21]

Chase was formally introduced to the group and presented his letter of introduction from Bishop Moore which assured the group of the young priest's ability to cope with the situation. After exchanging greetings, Chase called his listeners' attention to two omissions in the charter. The rector was not included in the corporation and there was no promise of conformity to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church.[22] It was not likely that he, as an impassioned convert, would chance being cut off from his new-found faith by associating himself with a small group of isolated Christians of various denominations without full assurance that what they were organizing was an Episcopal Church. It was not at all clear in their call that this group wanted the Episcopal Church; they had specified only that they wanted an Episcopal clergyman. But Chase was a man under authority, under a Bishop of Apostolic Succession, and the group had to conform to the church law if he was to remain. They assured him they would conform to Episcopal Canons. Chase then drew up a contract between himself and the New Orleans group in which he spelled out the specific conditions necessary for his acceptance of the post. It was a mutual agreement with responsibilities to be accepted by both parties. The preamble read in part as follows:

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[19] Ibid., 55.

[20] Louisiana Gazette, November 15, 1805.

[21] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church, New Orleans, November 10, 1805. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

[22] Chase, Reminiscences, 55.

> . . . hereby covenanting and agreeing the said wardens and vestrymen, to do, perform, and discharge to the best of his ability, all and singular the services, duties, and obligations to the said cure and office belonging as in anywise appertaining, fulfilling the said functions thereof, with care, zeal, and fidelity, and studying, consulting, promoting, and cultivating the lawful interests, prosperity, and harmony of the said Church and congregation, of which he hereby covenants and agrees to become the permanent Rector and Pastor.[23]

He asked also that the parish be placed under the authority of the Bishop of New York until a bishop could be procured for Louisiana.

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[23] Articles of Agreement, New Orleans, 1806. Manuscript in possession of author.

With the assurance that the charter would be amended to conform to the general canons of the Episcopal Church, an election was held for wardens and vestry. Joseph Saul and Andrew Burk were elected senior and junior wardens, respectively, and the following were chosen to serve with them on the vestry: Judge Jean B. Prevost, Dominic A. Hall, Benjamin Morgan, William Kenner, Joseph McNeil, George T. Ross, Charles C. Norwood, Regin D. Sheppherd, Richard Relf, Edward Livingston, John McDonough, John P. Sanderson, and Abraham R. Ellory. Thus Christ Church became the first Episcopal Church in the entire Mississippi Valley.[24]

The next day, Sunday, November 17, 1805, the new priest read a service from the Book of Common Prayer and preached a sermon. For the first time, English corporate worship was held in an organized congregation in the vast expanse of land so recently acquired by the United States from France in the Louisiana Purchase. The service took place in an upstairs room of the Cabildo, overlooking the historic Place d'Armes, where the Territory of Louisiana had passed from Spain to France and from France to the United States in a twenty-day period less than two years before.[25]

Chase relates in his reminiscences that a large number of the English-speaking citizens who attended this service were "of the most respected Americans." The following day he found a note on his desk, dated November 16, 1805, as follows: "Resolved unanimously, That Mr. Chase receive the thanks of this meeting for the readiness and zeal he has displayed in the early tender of his services to the New Orleans Protestant Church."[26] The wording of this note probably disturbed Chase. He had made the point clear that he was a priest of the Episcopal Church and that if he were to minister to them it would be under the discipline of that church, under the authority of the Bishop of New York. The parishioners had agreed, yet the wording of the note indicates they still thought of themselves as the New Orleans Protestant Church and not, as yet, Christ Episcopal Church.

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[24] Chase, Reminiscences, 56.

[25] Ibid., 58.

Several days later the vestry met again, and on November 20, Chase received a second note from that body asking him to be rector at the rate of $2,000 per year beginning with the date of his departure from New York until the next May.[27] This note could be taken as a formal call from the corporate group, but there were two aspects to the call that he did not like. First, the vestry were still asking him to be rector of the New Orleans Protestant Church and not an Episcopal Church. Second, this was apparently a trial call, since the salary was only guaranteed through the following May. He was faced with a decision which could affect not only his own future, but the future of the Episcopal Church in the Mississippi Valley.[28]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

He determined to clarify the matter by writing a note to the vestry setting down the terms and conditions of his acceptance.[29] This was not to be a trial period and he would under no condition accept it as such. It would be better to return to Poughkeepsie than to bring his wife on such a long journey for a trial job. He insisted that the salary be $2,000 per year plus a house or $800 per year in lieu of a house. He further insisted "that my induction take place agreeable to the forms already established in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America."[30] He gave the vestry until the sailing time of the brig Thetis for New York to make their decision.[31]

The vestry explained that they had a year's salary already pledged but did not want to make promises beyond May. In response to Chase's wishes, George Morgan and Joseph Saul made a further canvass which brought annual pledges of $5,000 per year. On this basis the vestry accepted the priest's financial arrangements. Accordingly, on December 11, 1805, Messrs. Burke, Saul, and Ellory issued a call to Chase on his terms. He accepted on December 12, 1805.[32]

In the process of this bargaining, the young priest assured his own financial future, but that was not his only concern. Since this was the first Episcopal Church to form a permanent organization in the Territory of Orleans and

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[29] Ibid., 59. [30] Articles of Agreement.

[31] Chase, Reminiscences, 60. [32] Ibid., 61.

Louisiana, he felt that the nature and character of the Church must be clearly understood at this time. If he compromised the doctrine, discipline, or worship of his Faith in any way, others might perpetuate his mistake. The people in New Orleans did not understand fully his position as a priest, and he could not and would not consider this matter settled until vestry suggested amendments to the Charter to make it conform to the usage of the Church. The General Assembly of the Territory of Orleans finally accomplished this change on May 2, 1806, and it was signed by Governor Claiborne.[33]

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[33] Section 1. Be it enacted by the Legislative Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Orleans, in general assembly convened, That the title and seal of the corporation created by the said act, shall after the passing of this act, be "The Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of Christ's Church in the county of Orleans, in communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America:"

Section 2. The vestry of said church shall always consist of the rector, when the church has one, and fifteen persons, members of the said church, namely, two church wardens, and thirteen vestrymen, a majority of whom shall constitute a quorum; and the election of said church wardens and vestrymen shall be made by a majority of the members, of the said corporation present, every year, immediately after morning service, on Monday in the week called Easter week, of which election at least one week previous notice shall have been given by the clergyman in time of service, or in his absence through the medium of the public prints.

Section 3. Wherever the said church be destitute of a rector, the church wardens and vestrymen, or a majority of them shall have power to call and induct a rector agreeably to the form of an office of inductions of ministers into the parishes of churches prescribed by the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, established in general convention of the bishops, the clergy and laity, September, eighteen hundred and four, or so far agreeably to it as their want of the assistance of other clergymen may admit: Provided always, that the rector so inducted shall be subject to the ecclesiastical government and decisions of

The amended charter did not repeat the articles of the original charter of July, 1805, which was adequate to set up the parish vestry as a body politic. What disturbed Chase was that it did not conform to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, and Christ Church might in the future become an independent Episcopal Parish, separate from the National Church. To correct this he had the phrase "in communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" included in Section 1 to assure the future of Christ Church as a part of the Anglican system. Section 2 simply changed the annual parish meeting to conform to the usual Easter Monday meeting which was customary at that time.

Section 3 was carefully worded to restrict the vestry in the future to calling only a qualified, ordained priest

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the bishop and convention of the state of New York, in all things as if he were a presbyter belonging to that diocese, until there shall be a diocese formed in this and the neighbouring territories, and a bishop consecrated according to the canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church to take charge of the same. And it shall be the duty of the said rector then inducted, to call all meetings of the said vestry, to attend and preside and preserve order in the same, and have the casting vote; and by and with the consent of the wardens to appoint a clerk and sexton of said church, and to perform, all and singular, the duties of a rector of the church and faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

Section 4. The second and third sections of the said act shall be, and the same are hereby repealed. L. Moreau Lislet, A General Digest of the Acts of the Legislature of Louisiana: Passed from the year 1804, to 1827, Inclusive (New Orleans, 1828), 167.

who consented to the canonical requirement of the Episcopal Church. Chase must have suspected that the majority of the group might do otherwise, and they did indeed ask Methodists and Presbyterians to lead their organization later in spite of his careful charter adjustments. He sought also to place the parish and the rector under the Bishop and Diocese of New York to prevent a recurrence of the older parishes' experience of having no episcopal supervision.[34]

The amended act of incorporation included the rector in the structure of the corporation in accordance with Chase's wishes and the Canon Law of the Episcopal Church. The matter of allegiance was clarified by adopting the title of "Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of Christ Church, in the County of Orleans, in communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America." It now became clear that this church group was to be a legal part of the Episcopal Church.

To give further strength to the rector's position as a priest of the Church, the act of incorporation stated that:

> The rector to be called to the Church, should be so called and induced agreeably to the form prescribed by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, established in General Convention of the Bishops, the clergy and laity, September, 1804, and should be subject to the ecclesiastical government and decisions of the Bishop and Convention of the State of New York, in all things as if he were a presbyter belonging to that Diocese, until there should be a

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[34] *Ibid.*, 168-69.

> Diocese formed in this and the neighboring territories, and a Bishop consecrated according to the canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to take charge of the same.[35]

All of Chase's time, however, had not been occupied in legal entanglements. Since his arrival in November, he had conducted regular services at the Cabildo. In addition, he had petitioned the City Council for a church site as required by law and had asked Governor Claiborne for the keys to the cemetery in order to bury his parishioners in consecrated ground. Christ Church as a worshiping community had gained unity of purpose: a seal had been designed for the church, and the parish had grown sufficiently to name a committee to solicit funds for constructing a house of worship.[36]

Assured of his personal security and content that the group had cooperated with his efforts to found an orthodox and canonically constituted parish of the Episcopal Church, Chase left for Vermont on April 2, 1806, to bring back his family. He docked in New York in the early summer of 1806 to find that his wife's consumption had grown much worse during his winter's absence. In her illness Mrs. Chase could not properly care for her two young sons, and reluctantly, she and Chase decided to leave the boys with relatives. On the way to New York to catch their boat for New Orleans, Mrs.

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[35] Articles of Agreement.

[36] Vestry Minutes, 1805.

Chase suffered a severe hemorrage of the lungs which nearly caused them to miss the boat. Although they managed to board, they had to arrange for their household goods to follow on the next sailing. Mrs. Chase prospered in the salt air at sea, but her husband was again bothered by seasickness.[37]

The new rector of Christ Church and his wife arrived in New Orleans in November, 1806. Since they were without household goods, the Junior Warden, Andrew Burk, invited them to stay at his home. During their stay, one of the Burk's young daughters became sick and died. Burk, stricken by this loss, took a fatal dose of poison. This was the first death of a Christ Church vestryman and was the rector's first New Orleans funeral service. He committed the two bodies to the earth side by side.[38]

The young priest instituted regular public worship without delay. He obtained permission to use the United States Courtroom on Royal Street and converted it into a chapel. He led a substantial number of people there each Sunday in the Anglican Tradition of corporate worship, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion was administered to "several devout persons of both sexes."[39] Although the church as a whole did not frequently celebrate the Holy Sacrament, the convert Chase saw it as an important part of the church's devotional life.

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[37] Chase, _Reminiscences_, 65-66.

[38] _Ibid_., 70.

[39] _Ibid_., 68.

Several months passed before Chase learned that the brig Polly Eliza had sunk off the Cuban coast with all of the possessions he had accumulated over the years, including his library. Now the financial task of replacing his losses was added to his burdens. He decided to open a school as he had done in Poughkeepsie.[40] With money borrowed from friends, he soon established a residence about three miles below the city and began accepting pupils.

The school was so successful and popular that he soon moved into the city to a location on Dauphine Street and later into the American section on Tchoupitoulas Street where he rented a building for $1,000. His school quickly gained a reputation not only among the people of his own church but with people from distant places.[41] He later recalled these years as "laying the foundation of a Christian and virtuous education in some of the best families in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana."[42]

During the six years Chase ministered to the faithful of New Orleans, the place of worship was moved several times, finally settling in an upstairs room over Paulding's Jewelry Store on Decatur Street. A permanent House of Worship, the young priest's dream, was talked about when he returned in 1806. Enthusiastically he urged the people to petition his bishop in New York for ecclesiastical union with his diocese in hopes that they could obtain assistance in this endeavor.[43] Christ Church remained under the care of the Bishop of New York, but it did not become part of the Diocese of New York and therefore received no aid in building a church.[44]

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[40] Ibid., 74. [41] Ibid., 92. [42] Ibid., 100.

In December, 1807, President Jefferson had placed an embargo on all shipping in order to improve relations with France and Great Britain. The decrease in legal imports gave rise to the illegal activities of Jean Lafitte the pirate and, while he flourished, more law-abiding men endured hard times. There was no money for a church and Philander Chase was to leave Louisiana with this goal unaccomplished. Financial difficulties were common to all Orleanians, and financing the capital and operational budgets of the new parish occupied a considerable amount of the vestry's time at meetings. In the early history of Christ Church the parish leaders used three different approaches to obtain funds. The first was by subscription of members or other interested parties. Invitations to subscribers were issued in the Louisiana Gazette on June 7, 1810. This was the first such notice before the general Protestant groups became Christ Episcopal Church. "Subscriptions will be received for a Protestant Church by Messrs. Hugh Pollack,

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[43] Vestry Minutes, 1805.

[44] Journal of the Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York, 1808, 18.

Jos. M'Neil, Richard Relf, and John M'Donough, at each of their respective places of residence."

Capital expension required greater funds for which the vestry tried a get-rich-quick scheme. For this purpose they sought legislative approval for a lottery as indicated by a public announcement:

> Scheme of the First class of Christ Church Lottery as authorized by an act of the legislature - to wit:
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | 1 prize of | | $3,000.00 |
> | 2 prizes of | $1,500.00 | 3,000.00 |
> | 4 prizes of | $ 500.00 | 2,000.00 |
> | 20 prizes of | $ 100.00 | 2,000.00 |
> | 100 prizes of | $ 20.00 | 2,000.00 |
> | 600 prizes of | $ 5.00 | 3,000 |
>
> The last drawn tickets on the 2nd, 4th, and 6th days drawing $500.00 each $1,000.00
> The last drawn tickets on the 8th and 9th days - $1,000.00 each $2,000.00
> 2,000 tickets at $10.00 - $20.00
> Prizes not demanded within 6 months after the drawing is finished to be considered relinquished for the benefit of the Church.
> Tickets to be had of the subscribers:
>
> Richard Dow
> Benj. Morgan
> Richard Relf
> Geo. W. Morgan
> R. D. Sheperd[45]

This method proved unsuccessful, and the anticipated profits for Christ Church were not forthcoming. In fact the lottery did not sell enough tickets to meet the cost of the prizes and further debt was incurred.

A more conventional method of church support in the nineteenth century was the renting of pews to individuals on an annual basis. The rentor had the right to occupy that particular pew during church services and resulting funds were used for the operation of the church. Usually pews were set aside for strangers and visitors but the system had the effect of making a church a private club, and it was gradually abolished in favor of direct pledges. Christ Church was among the first in Louisiana to institute this custom and among the last to relinquish it.

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[45] Louisiana Gazette, August 1, 1808.

During these years of hardship Chase continued to minister the Word and Sacrament to his people. Each Sunday he saw new faces at the services, but they were the faces of a transient population which gave no essential financial backing to the church. The death of some subscribers and removal of others made the church's financial resources still more meager.[46] Pledges were not paid and an offering was instituted at Sunday services to supplement the pledges.[47]

Even with this additional income, the vestry was unable to pay the rector his full salary and the young priest was prompted to write a painful series of letters to the vestry requesting his salary. In the first request, which appeared in the vestry minutes on July 2, 1808, he simply reminded the wardens and vestry of their contract and the need for a salary for living purposes.[48] Fifteen months passed with no response and Chase wrote again, offering to resign if the vestry was unable or unwilling to pay his earned salary.[49] Two months later, when he wrote again and indicated that he was leaving, the vestry responded within a fortnight.[50] A. R. Ellery addressed a letter to Chase on behalf of the vestry expressing their regret at not sending his salary. They asked him to remain on a reduced salary and promised to collect as many back subscriptions as possible. The young priest finally resigned in 1811 and had to wait thirty years to collect his back salary of $1,500.00.[51]

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[46] A. R. Ellery, New Orleans, to Philander Chase, January 10, 1810. Manuscript in possession of author.

[47] Vestry Minutes, December 12, 1822.

Chase resigned apparently because of the financial neglect of his parish. However, he gave as the reason for his resignation that he did not want to bring his two young sons to New Orleans.[52] Therefore he returned to reunite his family and to educate his sons.

Chase accomplished a great deal for the Episcopal Church in Louisiana. He had established Christ Church according to the canons, doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church. He had settled the question once and for all of what kind of church was to be founded in New Orleans: the One,

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[48] Vestry Minutes, July 2, 1808.

[49] Vestry Minutes, October 25, 1809.

[50] Vestry Minutes, December 29, 1809, January 10, 1810.

[51] Vestry Minutes, 1848.

[52] Chase, Reminiscences, 101.

Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church as he had come to know her in the Book of Common Prayer. Community services had been established on the Lord's Day, the Word was preached and the Sacraments administered. Chase had provided a means of education for the English-speaking youth of New Orleans and the lower Mississippi Valley area when such facilities were extremely limited. Later, he became one of the great missionaries of the Episcopal Church and served as Bishop of Illinois, Ohio, and ultimately, as Presiding Bishop of the Church in the United States.[53]

On April 30, 1812, the Territory of Orleans became the State of Louisiana. The United States faced a war with Great Britain, a war which came ultimately to New Orleans. Philander Chase of Christ Church had departed in 1811 and the infant parish was in financial difficulty with no house of worship. For three years no progress was made and the church nearly expired for it was without a priest to administer the Word and the Sacraments.

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[53] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 256.

# CHAPTER III

## DR. HULL AND THE WAR OF 1812

The "Glorious 8th of January," 1815, ended the threat that Louisiana would pass by treaty or treachery into European hands. For several years international tension had mounted between the young United States and her former mother country, Great Britain--tension which finally erupted into open hostility. The War of 1812 reached New Orleans in late fall of 1814. During these years, Jean Lafitte and his Baratarians gladly supplied the economic and luxury desires of cosmopolitan New Orleanians with their stolen wares, and, with more legitimate channels restricted their trade flourished. It was an exciting time when people of high society dared to do business with a gentleman thief.

The members of the Episcopal flock probably participated in these financial dealings. It was especially easy for them to do so because they had money and they had no pastor to guide them. From the departure of Chase in 1811 until the spring of 1814, the activities of the church waned.[1] The entire parish went along with the times, and, until February, 1814, the vestry met only twice and then their main topic of discussion was the lottery rather than the Lord.[2] Governor Claiborne allowed the church to use a government house for public worship where poorly attended services were conducted by lay readers. The constitution of the Apostolic Church provides for ministry by the Apostles' successors and where this is lacking only temporary and often unresponsive reception is found. Yet in this case, as on many occasions since, the ministry of laymen formed a continuity of worship otherwise not possible. Sufficient interest remained to keep alive the idea of building a church, and an effort was made to secure a lot from the city. A clear title could not be given and this, like most other church matters, had to wait.[3]

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[1] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church, New Orleans, 1811-1814, passim. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

Had the Episcopal Church been stronger nationally, some initiative might have been taken to send a priest to the shepherdless flock, but the national church was struggling for survival in the aftermath of the Revolution.[4] Furthermore, the country was involved in the War of 1812, and had a priest been available it is doubtful that he would have gone to New Orleans, since the church lacked a missionary organization to send him. Again the initiative was taken by the local group for the ministry of a priest.

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[2] Vestry Minutes, 1811.

[3] Vestry Minutes, 1814.

[4] William W. Manross, _A History of the American Episcopal Church_ (New York, 1950), 154.

The revival of interest in the Episcopal Church came through the arrival of a Methodist minister in New Orleans.[5] The Reverend William Winans came to New Orleans in 1813, established a school, and having been refused permission to use the Cabildo building he began to conduct preaching services in one of the classrooms on Sunday. Episcopalians, being without priestly leadership, began to attend the Methodist meetings.[6] This seemed to stimulate a renewed interest in their own church, and committees were set up to obtain land from the city for a church building and to organize a lottery to raise funds. A third committee was approved by the vestry on March 27, 1814, consisting of Alfred Hennen, a lawyer, and J. W. Smith. Their task was to ask Winans, the Methodist minister, to preach as _locum tennum_ for the Christ Church congregation.[7] In the Anglican Communion none but a duly ordained bishop, priest or deacon may serve. Therefore, Winans' position was that of lay reader, although he was not licensed by any authority for this office. He had preached only for several weeks, when another clergyman arrived in New Orleans who was to prove

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[5] Vestry Minutes, 1813.

[6] Hodding Carter and Betty Werlein Carter, _So Great A Good, A History of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana and of Christ Church Cathedral, 1805-1955_ (Sewanee, 1955), 18.

[7] Vestry Minutes, March 27, 1814.

Winans' undoing as "pastor" of Christ Church.[8] Chase's work of establishing Christ Church as an Episcopal Church now seemed lost.

Dr. James F. Hull's arrival in New Orleans was to begin a new day for the church. His appearance in the city came as the War of 1812 neared New Orleans, and during his early months there, he was to see the strange combination of United States troops under General Andrew Jackson united with Tennessee riflemen, Indians, civilians, Free Negroes, etc., and Lafitte's Baratarians to defeat the British regulars at Chalmette. Regin Shepherd, a vestryman and founder of Christ Church, carried his good friend Judah Touro wounded from the battle.[9]

Touro, the great philanthropist, was to prove a firm friend of Christ Church for many years to come. The Battle of New Orleans brought together Creoles and Americans as friends and fellow citizens; no doubt it brought the English-speaking members of Christ Church into more intimate contact with the Creoles, making them and the Episcopal Church more acceptable to each other. Dr. Hull seized upon this advantage to further the church's work for the next nineteen years.

James F. Hull came from Georgia to New Orleans to practice law.[10] He was originally from Ireland and had been a Presbyterian minister in Belfast.[11] As a lawyer, he made friends at the coffeehouses and card tables of New Orleans and among these acquaintances was a vestryman of Christ Church, who prevailed upon him to begin preaching. William Winans, as the minister of Christ Church, objected to Dr. Hull's preaching.[12] Nevertheless, on June 11, 1814, Dr. Hull preached at the Sunday service. The following day the vestry asked Dr. Hull to be their minister beginning January 1, 1815, when Dr. Winans' contract expired.[13] Subscriptions were raised to guarantee his salary. This was the beginning of a ministry which lasted until 1833 and which saw great progress in the growth of the church's work in New Orleans, as well as in other parts of Louisiana.

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[8] Carter, So Great A Good, 16.

[9] Judah Touro was a public-spirited Jew who gave of his time and money for the good of his community and was an ardent supporter of Christ Church.

Once again the vestry had called a man who was not an ordained priest to be their minister. Chase had been a Congregationalist layman before his ordination; Winans was a Methodist, and now the group had called a Presbyterian. From the beginning, many of this group had thought of themselves as the New Orleans Protestant Church. Chase had taken every necessary step to make them a part of the Episcopal Church, but their general attitude continued to prevail and was strengthened by the refusal of the Diocese of New York to accept them as a spiritual child, and by the inability of the National Church to send a missionary priest. Ironically, it was Dr. Hull, a Presbyterian, who assured the continuance of the Apostolic Ministry at Christ Church.

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[10] Carter, So Great A Good, 18.

[11] Vestry Minutes, 1814.

[12] Carter, So Great A Good, 18.

[13] Vestry Minutes, 1814.

Functioning as the minister of Christ Church, even though he was not ordained, Dr. Hull began to use the Book of Common Prayer and examined the tenets of the Episcopal Church. Perhaps he was attracted by the church's liturgy, her Scriptural faithfulness, and historical continuity with the Church of the Apostles and their successors. At any rate, in January, 1816, he announced to the vestry that he would accept the rectorship of Christ Church if they would wait for him to be ordained. A committee consisting of Abner L. Duncan, Richard Relf, and G. W. Smith was appointed January 14, 1816, to extend the formal call contingent on ordination.[14] He journeyed to New York and was ordained deacon on June 17, 1816, and priest a few months later.[15] He then returned to New Orleans a minister of the Apostolic Succession, eligible to accept the call to be rector.

Meanwhile, plans for the building of a church edifice could now be pursued. The vestry secured a piece of land on Canal Street, in the square bounded by Canal, Bourbon, Royal, and Customhouse streets. Part of the land had been purchased and part had been donated by the city.[16] An adjacent lot 60 x 100 feet was purchased for a rectory. The price was $3,000, and the act of sale was passed June 3, 1815. Benjamin Morgan and Richard Relf were appointed to head a fund-raising campaign and succeeded in raising $8,000.[17] Henry Bonerd Latrobe was selected as architect, and the church was completed in April, 1816.[18]

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[14] Vestry Minutes, March 27, 1816.

[15] Vestry Minutes, June 17, 1816.

The first Christ Church building was octagonally shaped, about sixty feet in diameter and of brick construction. The parish held its first regular annual meeting in the building and one of the original vestrymen, Richard Relf, was elected warden.[19] After eleven years of struggle, the English-speaking citizens now had a House of Worship. The building was ready when Dr. Hull returned to New Orleans as a priest, and soon after his return, plans were begun for the construction of a rectory, but this building did not materialize for another nine years.[20]

Hull's active ministry lasted until 1830, when his health failed and he was relatively inactive. One writer described Hull's seventeen years at Christ Church as a period

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[16] Carter, So Great A Good, 53.

[17] Vestry Minutes, June 3, 1815.

[18] Vestry Minutes, April, 1816.

[19] Carter, So Great A Good, 20.

[20] Vestry Minutes, 1825.

"of solid growth."[21] There was a deepening of the spiritual life of the parish, a quality which is difficult to measure except by outward activities. In addition to the building of the church and rectory, Hull opened a school for young ladies. His reasons for doing so were probably financial, for the early history of the church in New Orleans is one of financial struggle and during Hull's rectorship debts were a constant problem.[22]

Another lottery was organized in 1822 to pay off the loss of the 1810 lottery.[23] But this lottery accomplished little and the vestry had to borrow money on several occasions to make ends meet.[24] Like his predecessor, Hull was forced to remind the vestry of his salary payments and it was to supplement his irregular salary that he began the school.[25] This school may have had a continuity with Chase's school.[26] It was located at Number 2 Bourbon Street and was described as a school for young ladies of high quality. The Hull

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[21] Herman Cope Duncan (comp.), The Diocese of Louisiana: Some of Its History, 1838-1888. Also some of the History of its Parishes and Missions, 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 53.

[22] Georgiana Fairbanks Taylor, "The Early History of the Episcopal Church in New Orleans, 1805-1840," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXII, No. 2 (April, 1939), 24.

[23] Vestry Minutes, 1822.

[24] Vestry Minutes, August 7, 1825.

[25] Taylor, "Early History," 19.

[26] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 53.

School lasted until 1870 and one may conjecture that many young ladies of Louisiana obtained their intellectual training there.

On September 7, 1822, Christ Church purchased at a cost of $3,140.57 a tract of land which was dedicated as a cemetery.[27] This became known as the "Girod Street Cemetery" and existed until recent years. Although it was a heavy burden for the vestry, this cemetery became the burying place not only for the members of Christ Church, but for other protestants as well.[28]

During Hull's ministry, the Presbyterians founded a church of their own in New Orleans. It must be remembered that the worshippers of Christ Church were not all Episcopal communicants, and the Presbyterians who wished to establish their own church did so when a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Elias Cornelius, arrived in 1817.[29] As a gesture of good will, Hull made a personal donation of $300 to the Presbyterian building fund, which established a cordial relationship between the clergy and congregations of the two churches.

The last years of Hull's ministry were dominated by his ill health and a consequent confusion among the vestry. Beginning in 1830, Hull's health prevented him from fulfilling his duties as a priest. While the vestry was anxious to assure their rector of their continued affection, they were equally eager to continue Christ Church as a strong parish through energetic priestly care. Attendance at services had declined to the point where some action had to be taken, and the vestry saw a way out of the dilemma by requesting Hull to get an assistant.[30] The ailing rector agreed to this and offered to have his own salary reduced so that the parish finances might bear the increased expense.[31] The matter lagged for another year before it was finally decided at a special meeting of the vestry at the home of William Christy.[32] It was resolved that "the office of Rector of Christ Church to be vacant, the vestry proceed forthwith to fill the vacancy." This they did by electing the Reverend Francis Lister Hawkes, D.D., rector of St. Thomas' Church, New York, as rector at a salary of $2,500 per year plus the use of the rectory. This was the first of three calls Christ Church issued to Dr. Hawkes, the first two of which he declined. Hull protested the vestry action but his health removed him from any further duties and he died June 6, 1833. The vestry generously extended the pension allowed Hull to his widow.[33]

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[27] Carter, So Great A Good, 28.

[28] Louisiana Gazette, November 12, 1822.

[29] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 63.

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[30] Christ Church Vestry to James Hull, New Orleans, November 15, 1831. Manuscript in possession of author.

[31] James Hull to Christ Church Vestry, New Orleans, November 30, 1831. Manuscript in possession of author.

[32] Vestry Minutes, December 11, 1832.

During Hull's illness the work was continued by two assistants in accordance with vestry action. The Reverend Ulysses M. Wheeler was chosen by the vestry on February 5, 1832, and was followed by the Reverend William Barlow who was in New Orleans and was requested by the vestry to serve.[34] At the same time a resolution called for a vestry committee "to take all steps to find a permanent rector."

It was unfortunate that a conflict should have arisen between a priest who had served well and those whom he served. Even more tragic was the canonical entanglement which ensued when the vestry sought to replace Hull as rector. The priest retorted that the vestry had no right under Ecclesiastical Law to oust a rector and replace him.[35] To this the vestry replied that Christ Church was attached to no diocese and therefore was not subject to the canons. Christ Church was incorporated by the Louisiana Legislature and not by the Episcopal Church and the vestry had therefore every right to function as a corporate body under civil law. Hull did not have priestly prerogative since he had not been inducted into the office as rector under the canons of 1804.[36] Realizing that their action was technically proper but morally questionable the vestry voted their pastor a pension. Since they had assumed the function of an ecclesiastical body in 1805, one wonders about the consciences of those who appealed to civil law in order to oust their priest.

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[33] Vestry Minutes, June, 1832.

[34] Vestry Minutes, January 20, 1833.

[35] Vestry Minutes, December 2, 1832.

[36] Vestry Minutes, December 9, 1832.

In any event, the end of Hull's ministry of Christ Church made it painfully clear that the greatest need of the Church in Louisiana was to organize a diocese and have the ecclesiastical supervision of a bishop. In spite of difficulties before Hull's death, the parish began to prosper once again. The vestry, "considering the present building too small for the increased and increasing population of the city" voted to build a new building.[37] The final outcome was that Hull was given a pension. He soon became ill and during his illness, two assistant priests were in residence for a short time. After his death in June, 1833, the Reverend James A. Fox became the third rector of Christ Church.

During Hull's illness, $15,000 was raised by the vestry for a new Christ Church, and perhaps even more important, Bishop Brownell of Connecticut visited the parish in 1830. With the advent of a visiting Bishop, steps were taken to develop the scattered churchmen throughout Louisiana into parishes and a diocese. This movement, which occupied the next twelve years of the church's life in Louisiana, resulted in the formation of the Diocese of Louisiana and the election of its first bishop, the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk.

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[37] Vestry Minutes, April 15, 1833.

It was also while Hull was at Christ Church that attempts were made to establish Episcopal parishes in other parts of the State. A short-lived effort was made in Baton Rouge in 1819 when Episcopalians in the Baton Rouge area wrote to a friend in Boston pleading for the ministry of the Church. A lay reader, William Jennison, was sent and for three years conducted such services from the Prayer Book as a layman could. An act was passed by the State Legislature on March 16, 1820, incorporating "the Episcopal Congregation of Baton Rouge." Those who signed the act were: William Jennison, John Reid, Cornelius R. French, Wright Converse, George Steir, William Wikoff, Adam Winthrop, P. Pailhes, Charles Bushness, and Lloyd Gilbert. But this was a flock without a shepherd and its members frequently drifted into other groups. The parish was not permanently established until 1839.[38]

The establishment of the second permanent parish of the Episcopal Church in what is now the state of Louisiana is of greater interest than the Baton Rouge effort and deserves a closer look. It began with people seeking land which they found in English territory where the bluff-lands overlooked the east side of the Mississippi from Vicksburg, Mississippi, south to St. Francisville, Louisiana. These were rich and productive soils, and many English-speaking settlers were attracted to this region from the Southern States and from Great Britain. In some cases they moved entire plantations, household goods, farm implements, slaves, and families. They developed large plantations, eventually built palatial homes and some lived on a high social and cultural level.

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[38] Vestry Records of St. James Episcopal Church, Baton Rouge, 1844-1968. Also notes of the Episcopal Congregation of Baton Rouge, 1919-29. Records located in the archives of St. James Church.

This area in the present State of Louisiana is known as the Florida Parishes, in which Baton Rouge and St. Francisville are located, and was a British possession from 1763 to 1783. As a result of the American Revolution, England lost British West Florida to the Spanish who maintained control of the area until 1810 when the inhabitants rebelled. It was then attached to Orleans Territory. The influx of English-speaking citizens, which began in the British era, continued under Spanish domination.

Among them were many Anglican churchmen. As early as 1792 an Episcopal priest, the Reverend James Cloud, ministered the Word and Sacrament to churchmen on St. Catherine's Creek near Natchez.[39] He was expelled by the Spanish governor Baron de Carondelet but returned when the area became American territory. Episcopalians also settled around St. Francisville, but they had no priest.

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[39] Carter, So Great A Good, 6.

In 1826, the Reverend William R. Bowman of Pennsylvania came to West Feliciana to visit his sister, Mrs. Henry Stirling.[40] There he found churchmen long separated from the ministry of the Church and eager for the worship from the _Book of Common Prayer_. His brief visit engendered much enthusiasm among the people and on March 15, 1827, a meeting was called to organize a parish. At this meeting Thomas Butler and William Flower were elected wardens, and Dr. Ira Smith, Dr. Edward H. Barton, Henry Flower, Francis Dabney, Robert Young, John Munholland, Lewis Stirling, Muse Hause, Levi Blunt, and John Lobdell were elected to the first vestry.[41]

The vestry had their first meeting on March 31, 1827, at the office of Francis Dabney, and their first order of business was to call a priest to their parish. William Bowman was elected and accepted. Having formed a parish and called a priest, their next logical step was to build a House of God, and in May of the same year a vestry building committee was appointed.

Four lots were purchased for $250 in the town of St. Francisville.[42] The building committee, which consisted of

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[40] _Grace Episcopal Church_ is a printed sketch of Grace Church, St. Francisville, Louisiana, taken from handwritten notes in the Parish Register of Grace Church. Hereinafter cited as _Grace Church_.

[41] Duncan, _The Diocese of Louisiana_, 69.

[42] _Grace Church_.

Ira Smith, Edward H. Barton, William Gayoso Johnson, John Stirling, and John Lobdell, did its work quickly and well. They signed a formal contract with Willis Thornton:

> To erect, build and construct a church of brick, in a good substantial manner, with a solid foundation for such a building, and said church to be twenty-one feet in height to the square, the walls to be eighteen inches in thickness, fifty feet long, thirty-eight feet wide, with a vestry room in the rear of brick, balcony in front, eighteen feet high, the front to be of brick, the remainder of wood; the roof and said vestry room and church to be covered with good shingles, good painted plank floors in the body of the church, in the negroes' (sic) department, the vestry room and organ gallery; thirty-eight pews; one large double folding front door; two side folding doors into the negroes' (sic) department, and two doors to the Vestry room, to be made of panel work and moldings. The sides of the building to have four circular windows, with sixty lights each, the inside with molding also, the circular bannister and railing around the chancel, the stairway and the negroes' (sic) department, also the stairs leading to the organ gallery - - to be finished on or before December 25, 1828. The sum of $3,217 to be paid to the said architect.[43]

As the building of their church progressed, the vestry, on September 10, 1827, passed an additional resolution to widen the appeal of the service. Undoubtedly, some, if not all, members of the vestry were Masons and the resolution declared it expedient and proper that the Masonic order have a share in the cornerstone laying ceremonies. The church was ready for occupancy during the winter of 1828-29. Under the terms of the contract, although the walls were not plastered or painted, the cost of construction exceeded the contract price by $357.

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[43] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 69.

A worshiping community in the Feliciana country had now come together under a priest and in a church. On February 7, 1829, this parish was given legal status as a civil corporation. A charter was granted by the State Legislature to "The Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of Grace Church of the Parish of West Feliciana, in communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America."[44] Included in the charter was authority to conduct a lottery. In the case of Grace Church, all of the proper steps were taken to assure that this would be a parish of the Episcopal Church, unlike the New Orleans Christ Church which began as a protestant church. As yet there was no diocesan organization, but Grace Church would be Episcopal when a diocese was formed.

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[44] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 69.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE PROPOSED SOUTHWESTERN DIOCESE

One of the great paradoxes in American church history was that a church whose constitution required bishops as chief pastors should be without them for over 170 years. Although its first service was held in 1607, the Episcopal Church in America waited until 1784 before consecrating Samuel Seabury of Connecticut a Bishop of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.[1] A later bishop of Connecticut, the Right Reverend Thomas Church Brownell, prevented history's repeating itself with the church in Louisiana by making a visit there 24 years after it was founded. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church met in August of 1829. Its members recognized that the church was growing in the Mississippi Valley in spite of the national church's inability to sponsor the work and that the scattered churchmen there needed encouragement and the ministry of a bishop.[2] To this end, they requested that

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[1] William W. Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1955), 194.

[2] Thomas Church Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest" in the Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church,

Bishop Brownell visit the states lying west and south of the Allegheny Mountains,

> . . . to perform such Episcopal offices as might be desired, to inquire into the missions established by the Board, and to take a general survey of this country for the purpose of designating such other missionary stations as might be usefully established.[3]

Bishop Brownell made three such journeys, 1829, 1834, and 1836, visiting Louisiana on each one, and on the first two journeys he kept a careful diary.

At the time of his first trip Bishop Brownell was, at fifty years old, the youngest bishop of the church. The trip he undertook was one of over 6,000 miles and he was, no doubt, chosen for his ability to withstand the physical strain of such a journey. Vigor was not his only attribute. He was born of Presbyterian parents in Westport, Massachusetts, and studied for the ministry of that church. His studies, however, led him to the conviction that the Episcopal Church was closer than the Presbyterian to the model of the Apostolic Church instituted by Christ and continued by the bishops in "Apostolic Succession." He was confirmed in the Episcopal Church and after a brief career of teaching Latin, Greek, chemistry, and mineralogy was ordained by Bishop Hobart of New York in 1816. Three years

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VII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 1. Hereinafter cited as Brownell's Journal.

[3] Brownell's Journal.

later he was elected Bishop of Connecticut and was so consecrated.[4]

Journeying down the Mississippi River, accompanied by the Reverend William Richmond of New York, Bishop Brownell arrived at St. Francisville on January 2, 1829. "The following day," he wrote, "I preached in the new Church in that place to a large congregation. . . . The Church at St. Francisville is of brick, a neat edifice, and finished, all but plastering. The Reverend William Bowman officiates here with encouraging prospects of success."[5] The Bishop's visit encouraged the people at Grace Church so much that they raised an additional $1,100 the next day to finish the Church.[6]

Farther down the Mississippi, the Bishop visited the churches en route and arrived at New Orleans on January 8th with the Reverend James A. Fox.[7] He was met by a committee which extended him an invitation to attend a celebration at the Mariner's Church in honor of General Andrew Jackson, and his victory at the Battle of New Orleans. This festivity was canceled when only a few people showed up to take part in it.

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[4] Journal of the General Conventions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, 1785-1835, William Stevens Perry (ed.) (2 vols.; Claremont, N. H., 1874), II, 455.

[5] Brownell's Journal, 310.

[6] Grace Episcopal Church. A pamphlet based on the Register of Grace Church, St. Francisville, Louisiana.

[7] Brownell's Journal, 312.

On Sunday, January 10, 1830, Bishop Brownell, at the written request of the Christ Church wardens and vestry, performed the first Episcopal rites with a bishop presiding in the city of New Orleans.[8] Christ Church's building had been in use for 19 years and the parish was planning to build a new church, yet, due to lack of a bishop, the original church had never been consecrated. Bishop Brownell rectified this setting it apart as a Holy Place under the name of Christ Church using the Sentence of Consecration from the *Book of Common Prayer*. He was assisted by the Reverend Fathers James A. Fox, Albert A. Muller, Spencer Wall, John T. Adderly, and William Richmond in this office. A service conducted by the bishop and five priests of the church attracted considerable attention, and since Christ Church was not lighted, the bishop accepted an invitation to preach in the Reverend Theodore Clapp's Presbyterian Church. The bishop noted in his diary that Clapp had distinct leanings toward the Episcopal Church at this time and that although he had studied to become an Episcopal priest, he had never attained this goal.[9]

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[8] *Ibid*., 313.

[9] He also wrote favorably of the Roman Church. See Theodore Clapp, *Autobiographical Sketches and Recollections During A Thirty-Five Year' Residence in New Orleans* (Boston, 1857), *passim*.

The bishop administered the Apostolic Rite of Holy Confirmation to 64 persons on Wednesday the 17th after giving them a lecture and charge on the duties and privileges of communicant status.[10] This Sacrament is the normal step an Episcopalian takes before being admitted to the Holy Communion.

Keeping a busy pace, Bishop Brownell the next day presided at the long-awaited convention called in Christ Church for the purpose of forming a diocese.[11] Although this convention did not bear immediate fruit, it is significant because it was the first time Louisiana parishes had met together under a bishop to attempt to form a diocese. Bishop Brownell was the first Father in God for the Church in Louisiana and he noted that the leaders of the Church, both clerical and lay, from New Orleans and other parts of the state were in attendance. The three clergy in Louisiana at that time, the Reverend Fathers Hull, Bowman, and Fox, were present.[12] Bowman was elected secretary, a diocese was organized, and a constitution and canons were adopted. Members of a standing committee and other officers were also elected.

The plan at that time was one of expediency; to provide for regular Episcopal visitation and supervision. It was obvious to the delegates that a group as small as the church in Louisiana could not support a bishop, so they proposed to form a Province[13] authorizing the Diocese of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana to associate and join in "the election of a Bishop."[14] With this plan accepted by the Convention, the Bishop's work was well done and all seemed in order, but the plan was not put into effect for eight years.

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[10] Brownell's _Journal_, 313. [11] _Ibid_.

[12] Herman C. Duncan, _The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888_ (New Orleans, 1888), 3.

He departed from New Orleans on Wednesday, January 20, 1830, on the steamboat Mount Vernon and sailed through Lake Pontchartrain, the Rigolets, and the Gulf of Mobile. He returned to New Orleans and Louisiana on two other occasions during the eight-year period which Duncan calls "the epoch marked by abortive efforts at organization."[15] Although Bishop Brownell brought comfort to the churchmen at New Orleans and thought he had established the diocese, this was far from true. After his departure Christ Church was thrown into a confused state which lasted for several years. Two factors brought this confusion to the infant church in

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[13] A Province is a unit of an ecclesiastical body which consists of a group of dioceses which come together for purposes of mutual planning and consultation and is presided over by an archbishop or metropolitan. Diocesan autonomy is usually maintained and if the system functions at all it functions on a voluntary basis since there is really no canonical authority to enact legislation or policy except that of the diocese on the local level and the General Convention on the national level.

[14] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 4.

[15] Ibid., 2.

Louisiana in its efforts to organize a diocese following Bishop Brownell's visit.

The first event was the illness of the rector of Christ Church, Dr. Hull. After 1830, Hull's ministry was interrupted by long trips which were vain efforts to regain his health. The services of the church languished during these periods and the vestry felt that either Hull should retire or an assistant be hired. The vestry finally declared that under the canons of 1795, 1802, and 1820, the church in Louisiana was not subject to the jurisdiction of New York. The vestry was not responsible to the Bishop of New York, therefore, it had the right to retire and replace the rector. Furthermore, Hull had never been formally instituted as rector and, therefore, was actually not technically rector at all. He was retired on a pension and died in the spring of 1833.[16] Christ Church was without a rector until 1838, but services were sustained for most of that period by Bishop Brownell and temporary ministers.

The second factor causing confusion was the General Convention's failure in 1832 to accept Louisiana as a diocese. What actually happened at that Convention is difficult to reconstruct, but the outcome was the vague canon 1832 which read: "clergy and churches in the State of Louisiana" instead of "Diocese of Louisiana." This resulted in years of chaos and indecision for Louisiana churchmen.[17] Louisiana had fewer churches than Mississippi or Alabama but more communicants than either and more priests than Alabama. Bishop Brownell, who had acted as presiding officer at the Louisiana Convention in 1830, presented the motion. Perhaps it was an oversight, as Duncan suggests, but if so, it was most unfortunate, for it broke the unity of the church in Louisiana by involving it in technical, legal interpretations which postponed the coming of a bishop to Louisiana for six years.[18]

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[16] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church Cathedral, New Orleans, 1833. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

The divisive issue which prevented organization as a diocese grew directly from the vagueness of the canon of 1832. Confusion reigned among the diocesan planners as they discussed the technical interpretation of the failure of the General Convention to call the Louisiana parishes a diocese. Since Bishop Brownell moved the adoption of the canon and since the Church in Louisiana was equal in strength to Alabama and Mississippi, the ambiguous, faulty wording of the canon was probably an oversight; no diocesan structure existed in Louisiana. Therefore the phrase "churches in Louisiana" was an accurate description. However, it would have been accurate for the other states involved, and yet they were referred to as dioceses. Was this a clerical oversight or was it intentional? This question plagued and divided Louisiana churchmen for several years to come.

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[17] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 4.

[18] Ibid.

Too often history repeats itself, and the Louisiana Church expended her energies in needless and wasteful motions when she should have been preaching the gospel and administering the Sacraments to the faithful: the vestry minutes of rectorless Christ Church indicate that for the next several years the vestries were engaged in working out necessary legal details for the election and consecration of a bishop under the vague canon of 1832 which read:

> The Diocese of Mississippi and Alabama, and the clergy and churches in the State of Louisiana, are hereby authorized to associate and join in the election of a Bishop, anything in the canons of this church notwithstanding.[19]

The main intent of the canon of 1832 was to enable three states to join together under Episcopal control as the Eastern dioceses had done.[20] It raised several questions, however, in the minds of Louisianians. Did this canon, by not recognizing Louisiana as a diocese, forbid its forming into a diocese? And if so, how were the "clergy and churches of Louisiana" to be represented at the convention with Mississippi and Alabama to form a large South Western Diocese? Were the parishes to have their own representatives or were all to be represented by an elected group? Was each priest to attend or were they to be represented by elected delegates?

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[19] Georgiana F. Taylor, "The Early History of the Episcopal Church in New Orleans, 1805-1840," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXII, No. 2 (April, 1939), 40.

[20] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 228.

The Christ Church vestry was eager to get on with the business of taking all necessary steps to be recognized as a diocese by the General Convention of 1835. Since the wording of the 1832 canon ("the Churches in the State of Louisiana" rather than the "Diocese of Louisiana") indicated a non-acceptance by the convention of 1832, some further action was indicated. R. M. Wilman presented a resolution to the vestry calling for a reorganization to align the diocesan structure with the general canons.[21] Since the dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama had already acted to join Louisiana in forming the South Western Diocese, it was imperative that Louisiana unite here churchmen into an organization which could authorize official delegates to the proposed inter-state convention.

Accordingly, the vestry appointed Father Barlow, Joseph Lovell, and R. M. Wilman "to correspond with the Church in this State, recommending them to meet in Convention in the City of New Orleans, on the last Tuesday in March of the present year, for the purpose of forming a Constitution of the diocese, and appointing delegates to meet in convention with the Dioceses of Alabama and Mississippi."[22] The committee was further instructed to correspond with the authorities of the Alabama and Mississippi dioceses suggesting that "the meeting of the South Western Diocese take place in New Orleans on the last Wednesday of March of the present year at 10:00 o'clock (sic), and that they proceed forthwith to the formation of a Constitution of the South Western Diocese and the election of a Bishop."[23] Each parish was to be represented at the proposed convention by its priest and three laymen.

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[21] _Vestry Minutes_, January 31, 1833.

[22] _Ibid_.

On March 25, 1833, and March 26, 1833, the vestry met again and added Isaac Ogden, John Nicholson, R. Layton, Robert Prichard, William Flower, G. Vance, N. Cox, and W. Alderson to the aforementioned delegates to the organizational convention of the diocese. The absence of any records of this meeting or of subsequent action by Christ Church vestry strongly suggests that it was never held. If it was held, no action was taken to organize or reorganize the diocese, for later proceedings of the church in Louisiana clearly indicate that diocesan organization was still lacking.

R. M. Wilman received a letter from the Reverend James S. Fox, then president of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mississippi, calling for a meeting in New Orleans, on June 19, 1833, to form the proposed South Western diocese.[24] This is a further indication that the March meeting never took place. The contents of the letter also indicate that Fox was not aware of the difference of opinions in the Louisiana group over the interpretation of the canon of 1832. He pointed to the advantages of having a bishop and the desirability of receiving his ministrations as soon as possible. He referred to the states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana as "a diocese" and spoke of "the churches in Alabama and Louisiana." Such wording indicates that he saw no problem with the 1832 canon as did those in Louisiana once they had joined with the "Church in Mississippi" to form the South Western Diocese and elect a bishop. Unaware of Christ Church's attempt at persuading Father Hawkes to come to New Orleans, he suggested as bishop the Reverend Francis L. Hawkes, the distinguished scholar and rector of St. Thomas' Church in New York, as "generally preferred in the Diocese of Mississippi" and further suggested that the new bishop serve also as rector of Christ Church in New Orleans. The manner in which Fox interchanged the phrases "the Churches in" and "the diocese of" indicates clearly that no distinction between Louisiana and the other two states was intended, and, that a useless exercise in semantics had delayed diocesan structure for six years. A further indication of this is the fact that Fox requested the vestry of Christ Church to communicate directly with parishes in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, rather than with diocesan officials in New York.[25]

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[23] Ibid.

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[24] James A. Fox, Warren County, Miss., to Richard M. Welman, May 9, 1833. Manuscript in possession of author.

The vestry of Christ Church met to consider this letter and

> . . . concurred on the proposition contained in the said letter calling for a convention to be held in this city on the third Wednesday of June next, and moreover concur to receive as Rector of Christ Church in this City the person who may be appointed by the Bishop. . . .[26]

In a second resolution the vestry named Richard Relf, R. M. Wilman, Lucius C. Duncan, and William Christy as delegates to the proposed convention. Opinion in the vestry was shifting from sending representatives from a Louisiana convention to that of direct representation from parish churches. Due to this confusion the convention was not held in 1833 as planned. The two different approaches to organization caused further difficulties when organizational conventions were held two years later.[27]

Matters at Christ Church were also complicated by the lack of a rector. The vestry tried to replace Hull by directing vestryman Charles Harrold, who was traveling to New York, to call Dr. Francis L. Hawkes whom Fox had recommended.[28] This was the second time Hawkes had been called, and again he refused. Furthermore, the populace of New Orleans was growing, and the building was now totally inadequate. By December, 1833, a move to build a new church was voted.[29]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Vestry Minutes, May 24, 1833.

Louisiana was still without a diocesan organization; Christ Church had no rector; and the vestry and parishes were split over the issue of a new building. Once again the parish turned for help to Bishop Brownell who had done so much for them on his first official tour. This time he was asked to come as a friend of Christ Church to help straighten matters out.

The Bishop accepted the invitation to go to New Orleans, hoping that a winter in the South would prove "beneficial to his wife's health."[30] Leaving Hartford with his wife and daughter, Sarah, on November 16, 1834, he embarked on the ship Louisville at New York November 18 for New Orleans. During the fourteen-day cruise he met the Reverend R. A. Henderson of Philadelphia who was later to become the rector of the French Church in New Orleans.[31] He also revived his friendship with Lucius Duncan's brother Greer B. Duncan, a member of Christ Church.

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[28] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 7.

[29] Vestry Minutes, December, 1833.

[30] Thomas Church Brownell, Hartford, Connecticut, to Vestry of Christ Church, New Orleans, November 11, 1834. Manuscript in possession of author.

[31] The French Church enjoyed a semi-official relationship with the Episcopal Church in Louisiana for several decades and will be discussed in Chapter XII.

When the Louisville was secured at the New Orleans dock, Bishop Brownell was pleased to be met and given a cordial welcome by a delegation led by the wardens of Christ Church. He and his family were then taken to the home of Lucius Duncan, where they stayed during his five-month visit in New Orleans.[32] Ordinarily the Bishop and his family would have resided in Christ Church rectory, but this was occupied by Father Fox, who was supply priest at Christ Church until March 2, 1835.[33] There was some question in Brownell's mind about Fox's relationship to Christ Church and the part he was playing in the confused issues of diocesan organization. Therefore, the bishop indicated to Richard Relf that he was reluctant to stay at the rectory as Fox's guest. In addition to serving the needs of Christ Church, Brownell hoped also to effect the organization of the Southwestern Diocese and he suspected that Fox wanted the bishop as his guest in order to gain episcopal support for his own position.

Conditions of the church in Louisiana at this time are graphically reflected in Bishop Brownell's diary:

> On my arrival in New Orleans, I found the parish much depressed and discouraged. Some members of the

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[32] Brownell's Journal, 319.

[33] Hodding Carter and Betty Werlein Carter, So Great A Good, A History of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana and of Christ Church Cathedral, 1805-1955 (Sewanee, 1955), 36.

> congregation were attending other churches, others were in the habitual neglect of public worship. There was also a deep-rooted difficulty in the building of a new church, especially in regard to its location. After I had officiated a week or two, the Vestry requested that I would address the congregation on the affairs of the parish. On the following Sunday, after sermon, I accordingly addressed to them some conciliatory and encouraging remark.[34]

Christ Church was discussing the feasibility of building a church, and the Bishop stressed that in the construction of a House of God, unanimity was more important than the choice of a location. He further suggested that the church people of Louisiana take immediate steps toward the formation of the proposed Southwestern Diocese and the election of a bishop.[35] During his visit the bishop attended four conventions to further this purpose: two meetings in Mississippi and Alabama, which he attended to promote the organization of the request of Christ Church; the other two in New Orleans.[36] The Journals of the New Orleans Conventions are counted as the Founding Documents of the Diocese of Louisiana although the convention failed in its object and actual organization did not take place until 1838.

The bishop's presence in the area and his plea for unity among churchmen brought the members of Christ Church into harmony. The vestry and pewholders agreed to build a new church on the same site on Canal Street and raise $40,000 among the pew-holders to carry out their decision.

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[34] Brownell's Journal, 321.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 320.

Bishop Brownell convinced the vestry to call a meeting in another effort toward diocesan organization. The General Convention was to meet again in the fall of 1835, and, the Church in Louisiana would be given an opportunity to be accepted formally as a diocese. Therefore, the bishop urged the churchpeople in New Orleans to come together and make proper preparations for this meeting.[37]

Conciliatory though he was, the bishop's efforts to effect such organization as was necessary to obtain episcopal supervision did not succeed. Churchmen, both clergy and laity, had adopted opposite opinions on the legality of organizing a Louisiana diocese before forming a Southwestern Diocese and electing a bishop. In Christ Church the vestry felt that diocesan organization was incompatible with the plain wording of the 1832 canon.[38] Certain members of the parish felt that a diocesan organization must be completed before Louisiana could join the two others in a tri-diocesan convention. By majority vote of the pewholders, a notice was sent to Grace Church to join with Christ Church in effecting this organization.[39]

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[37] Ibid., 321.

[38] General Convention Journal, 1832.

[39] Vestry Minutes, January 18, 1835.

# CHAPTER V

## TWO CONVENTIONS CANCEL EACH OTHER

The Episcopal Church emerged from the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century with a reformed catholic liturgy. Its basic Catholic theology attempted reconciliation with the Protestant doctrine of John Calvin and Martin Luther. In this system there remained certain tensions between the old and the new theology and practice which have been described as "High" and "Low" Church approaches. The high churchmen usually emphasize Catholic theology and worship; the low churchmen stress reformed practices and doctrine. Both belong to the same ecclesiastical system and worship with the _Book of Common Prayer_. Following the American Revolution groups stressing these two approaches had polarized into opposing camps and had verbal exchanges.[1]

The clergymen in Louisiana in 1835 imported this issue from the East into the conventions called to organize a diocese. The Reverend Raymond Henderson came from Pennsylvania where these "churchmanship" fights had been particularly bitter. Hence he led the Louisiana group to form a diocese before any effort to get a bishop, for, to him, a bishop automatically meant high churchmanship. Henderson was working with a French Calvinist group, and, was opposed to strict Catholic theology. The Reverend James Fox had a bias to bishops as supervisors, and, perhaps wanted to be one. The other priest, the Reverend William Bowman, remembering the churchmanship controversies in the East and wanted to avoid them. This caused the group meeting in January, 1835 to seek diocesan status but not episcopal oversight. In March, on the other hand, the laity met with Bishop Brownell and sought a merger with Mississippi and Alabama in the "South Western Diocese" to get a bishop before they became a diocese. These two approaches caused the confusion in the early months of 1835 and prevented either a diocese from forming or a bishop from being elected for several years. We can call them the Henderson Group and the Brownell Group: the former seeking diocesan status; the latter desiring a bishop.[2]

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[1] William W. Manross, _A History of the American Episcopal Church_ (New York, 1955), _passim_.

The Henderson Group met in Christ Church, New Orleans, on Tuesday, January 20, 1835, as a convention commencing at 4:00 P.M.[3] It was attended by a total of seven persons, three priests and four laymen, who represented the two bona fide Episcopal Churches in Louisiana, and the French Evangelical Church. The clergy present were: the Reverend William R. Bowman of Grace Church, St. Francisville; the Reverend James A. Fox of Christ Church, New Orleans; and the Reverend Raymond A. Henderson of the French Church, New Orleans. The laity was represented by Joseph Lovell, R. M. Welman, and Robert Layton of Christ Church, and E. A. Barton from St. Francisville.[4] After electing Father Bowman chairman and Father Henderson secretary, the convention adopted a constitution and canons. The constitution consisted of seven articles which acknowledged the church in Louisiana as a part of the American Episcopal Church governed by the general church canons. (The articles also spelled out a simple diocesan organization which never was used.) Of the two canons the convention saw fit to adopt, it is interesting that the first and longer of the two was "of the manner in which a clergyman shall be brought to trial," which reflects their anti-bishop feeling. The Second canon simply provided for financial support of the convention by the member parishes.[5]

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[2] Hodding Carter and Betty Werlein Carter, So Great A Good, A History of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana and of Christ Church Cathedral, 1805-1955 (Sewanee, 1955), 39.

[3] Journal of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Louisiana, Held in Christ Church, New Orleans, on Tuesday, January 20, 1835 (New Orleans, 1835), 3.

The three clergy present presented to the Convention reports on the status of their respective parishes. Bowman of Grace Church gave an informal report which lacked any statistics. He indicated a large and growing group of worshipers but estimated only eight or ten communicants officially attached to the parish, indicating clearly the need for a bishop to administer Holy Confirmation. This fact was probably Bowman's main motive in seeking diocesan status for the churches in Louisiana. Statistically, the report of the Reverend James Fox of Christ Church, New Orleans, does not indicate a large amount of work either:

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[4] Ibid., 4.

[5] Ibid., 5.

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| Baptisms | 50 |
| Marriages | 6 |
| Funerals | 10 |
| Communicants | 70 |
| Sunday School Scholars | 50 |

Fox also reported that Christ Church was seeking to build a new church. The third report was given by the Reverend R. A. Henderson who had begun work with the French Evangelical Church after his arrival in New Orleans. Although Henderson was an ordained priest, this was not an Episcopal Church, and it was perhaps premature for the convention to receive his report before ascertaining the loyalty of this congregation. The French church seemed slow to accept the standards set by Philander Chase; nevertheless, the report indicated an opportunity for the Episcopal Church for there was a community of 30,000 citizens who spoke French, Spanish, or English, and the French Church was the only church which ministered in all three languages.[6] Henderson's plea was for aid in continuing the experiment. The convention responded by a resolution which admitted the French

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[6] _Ibid_., 6.

Evangelical Church to union with the diocese under the name "Church De La Résurrection, in the city of New Orleans."[7]

The convention acted also to form a diocesan standing committee and elected delegates to the General Convention of the American Episcopal Church who were instructed to seek admission for union of the Diocese of Louisiana into the General Convention meeting at Philadelphia. The delegates named were the Reverend Fathers Bowman, Fox, and Henderson, and Messrs. Thomas Butler, Joseph Lovel, and Isaac Ogden.

The essential problem of organization of the diocese is evident in the final resolution which read:

> Resolved, That in the event of the election of a bishop contemplated by the special canon of 1832, the clergy of this state, together with the delegates from the churches, appointed under that canon, be, and are hereby authorized to act on behalf of this convention, in the formation of a Southwestern Diocese.[8]

This clause was obviously a move by the delegates to placate the Brownell Group who felt the canon of 1832 allowed only for the formation of a Southwestern diocese. The Henderson convention opposed that approach and had gone ahead with the organization of the Diocese of Louisiana and had chosen delegates to the national Convention. The results of Henderson's convention were unacceptable to the Christ Church vestry because it failed to follow the Canon of 1832.

Hence, in the month following the vestry of Christ Church reversed its decision of January 18, 1835, and voted to convene with the dioceses of Alabama and Mississippi as an unorganized diocese.[9] Bishop Brownell was probably responsible for this decision; he had been traveling in Alabama and Mississippi and, on his return to Louisiana, informed the churchpeople in New Orleans:

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[7] Ibid., 7.

[8] Ibid., 8.

> The Diocese of Alabama has elected her clergy and six lay delegates, and the Diocese of Mississippi has elected the Reverend Pierce Connolly and seven lay delegates to meet the delegates from the parish of Louisiana, in the City of New Orleans, on Wednesday March 4th, inst., for the purpose of carrying into effect the objects contemplated by the special canon.[10]

Bishop Brownell's appeal was to accept the wording of the 1832 canon because it was the only authorization given by a General Convention to elect a bishop for the Southwest. Furthermore Alabama and Mississippi had already taken all necessary steps to conform to the provisions of the canon and waited for the Church in Louisiana to accept its requirements.

Accordingly, the vestry remanded its decision of January 31, 1833, favoring diocesan organization and gave specific approval of the Canon of 1832 which provided for a bishop for the three states.[11] Vestrymen Ogden, Duncan, Lovell, Wilman, and Christy were appointed "delegates to meet with the delegates from Mississippi and Alabama, and from the parish of St. Francisville, in this City, on Wednesday next, for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of the aforesaid canon.[12] Bishop Brownell, who was acting as rector of the parish, was asked to serve as a clerical delegate. James Fox had been serving as temporary rector of Christ Church and had attended the January convention to organize the diocese. In order to prevent the latter's attendance at the March convention to form the Southwestern Diocese the vestry terminated his relationship with the parish and at the same time asked the bishop to serve as rector.[13]

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[9] Vestry Minutes, March 2, 1835.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

Six weeks later the Brownell Group met and the clergy of Louisiana remained at home. The second document of the founding of the Diocese of Louisiana is the journal of the March, 1835, convention of the Episcopal Church which conformed to the canon of 1832.[14] Bishop Brownell, in the meantime, had gone to Alabama and Mississippi to meet with their respective conventions at Tuscaloosa and Natchez, and urged attendance at the convention of the Southwestern diocese.[15]

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[12] Vestry Minutes, March 2, 1835.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Journal of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Composed of Delegations From the Dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama and the Clergy and Churches of Louisiana Held in Christ Church in the City of New Orleans, on the 4th and 5th days of March A.D., 1835 (New Orleans, 1835), 3.

[15] Brownell's Journal, 320.

The convention of the Southwestern Diocese (the Brownell Group) consisted of clergy and laity from the dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama, but only laity from Louisiana. Henderson's efforts were to organize the Diocese of Louisiana before entering any joint scheme with Mississippi and Alabama. However, the obvious intent of the Canon of 1832 was for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to join together in some kind of union for purposes of joint Episcopal supervision. It was on this basis that the convention of March 1835 met, following Bishop Brownell's lead.

The Reverend Pierce Connolly was elected convention chairman, and credentials were presented first by the Diocese of Mississippi.[16] The Mississippi diocese approved the Canon of 1832 calling for the formation of a South Western Diocese but provided for the eventual establishment of separate dioceses when a sufficient number of clergy and laity was reached in any of the given areas. The Alabama resolution followed suit. The delegates from the state of Louisiana, R. M. Wilman, L. Lovell, W. Christy, L. C. Duncan, and I. Ogden, representing the Brownell faction of Christ Church vestry, also gave approval to the canon of 1832.[17]

The convention then proceeded to organize and give a seat to Bishop Brownell, but legal entanglements were not yet over. All the delegates agreed to follow the Canon of

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[16] Diocesan Journal, March, 1835, 4.

[17] Ibid., 7.

1832 although it belittled the Louisiana group, but the canon was ambiguous in other respects as well. The question remained whether the General Convention contemplated the establishment of a tri-state diocese, consisting of the states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana; or, whether it contemplated merely an association of the churches in the said states for the sole purpose of electing a bishop, who should be overseer of each independent state or diocese.[18]

The decision was made to interpret the canon as authorizing the formation of a general diocese and the delegates proceeded to form the Southwestern Diocese.[19] Having cleared the air of legal interpretation, the convention then set up the necessary diocesan organization and elected the Reverend Francis L. Hawkes, D.D., rector of St. Thomas Church, New York, as the unanimous choice for bishop of the Diocese.[20]

It was late April and springtime in Connecticut. Feeling his work was done, Bishop Brownell was ready to take his leave of New Orleans:

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[18] The attempt to organize the Southwestern Diocese was in imitation of the "Eastern Diocese" which organized in 1811 and consisted of the New England States of Massachusetts (including Maine), New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. None of these dioceses had sufficient strength to support a bishop and their association was a "federated diocese" for the purpose of episcopal oversight only. The clergy and laity in the states of Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama attempted to set up a multi-diocesan structure in order to have the presence of a bishop. The short life of the Eastern Diocese and the failure of the Southwestern Diocese to get underway discouraged any further arrangements of that sort.

[19] Diocesan Journal, March, 1835, 10.

[20] Ibid., 12.

> I had the satisfaction of seeing all these objectives in a fair way of accomplishment, through the blessing of Divine providence. The Congregation had been rallied together again. The Reverend Dr. Hawkes had been unanimously elected Bishop of the Southwestern Diocese and Rector of the Parish. . . .[21]

Little did the bishop know when he took his leave of Louisiana that the two conventions held in Louisiana had acted to cancel each other out and that Dr. Hawkes would refuse not only their election but that of the General Convention of 1835.[22] The results of the Henderson and Brownell conventions are reflected in the national General Convention and resulted in failure to form either a Louisiana Diocese or a Southwestern Diocese.

The triennial convention of the American Episcopal Church meeting in Philadelphia in August of 1835 did not see fit to seat the delegates from Louisiana.[23] The Henderson Louisiana convention had elected the three clergy and three of the laity to the General Convention. After examination, the chairman of the appointed committee, Bishop William Mead, made the following report:

> The Standing Committee of New Dioceses, to whom were referred "the Journal of the proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, of the State of Louisiana, held in Christ Church, New

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[21] Brownell's Journal, 321.

[22] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 3.

[23] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 257.

> Orleans, on Tuesday, January 20, 1835" and a memorial relating thereto, and also a copy of correspondence, which on examination is found to be irrelevant to the case, report -
>
> That it appears from the Journal of the Church in Louisiana, by the 152 Articles of the Constitution then accepted, acceeds to the Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in accordance with the 5th Article of the Constitution of the Church.
>
> The memorial referred to is dated April 20th, 1835 and is signed by three laymen who represented one of the Churches.
>
> It appears, as reported in the Journal, there are but two Churches in the State of Louisiana of which one is stated to contain "not more than eight or ten communicants, and the other seventy communicants." The latter church protests against the proceedings of the Convention, which requests the admission of the Church in Louisiana into Union with the General Convention.
>
> In view of this difficulty, the committee deems it inexpedient, at this time, to admit the Church in Louisiana into union with this Convention.[24]

Faced with this negative report, the deputies from Louisiana chose to withdraw their request.

The protestation by Christ Church referred to in the committee report is a printed document 24 pages in length which is a defense of the Southwestern Convention of March 4-5, 1835.[25] The pamphlet does in fact review the events which led up to the Southwest Convention and solves a number of problems covering the years 1830-1835, and the effort to form a Southwestern Diocese. Authorship of the Vindication is not revealed in the printed text, but there are indications that it was Bishop Brownell, as it reflects the bias of his group. It is apparent from the contents that the author was a knowledgeable person, having access to official records of the House of Bishops. This would indicate a bishop, and Bishop Brownell was the only one involved enough in the proceedings to write this kind of defense.

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[24] William S. Perry, General Convention Journal 1835, Half Century of the Legislation of the American Church Journal of the Early Convention, II (1823-1835), 614.

[25] A Vindication of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church composed of Delegations From the Dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama and the Clergy and Churches of Louisiana Held in Christ Church in the City of New Orleans, on the 4th and 5th Days of March, A.D. 1835. Hereinafter cited as Vindication.

Brownell noted the approach of the General Convention of 1835 and that one of the issues to be presented was for the provision of a bishop for the Southwestern states. The pamphlet stated that pursuant to the provisions of a special canon of 1832, a convention was held and Hawkes was elected bishop, but these proceedings were likely to be questioned at the General Convention having already been attacked in the press. In order to answer the charges made there, and present all the facts to the deputies the author set out to review the history of the movement for the formation of a Southwestern diocese as follows.

Bishop Brownell's first tour of the Southwest sponsored by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society "created a lively interest in the existing state and future prospects of the Church there" which led to the 1832 Canon.[26]

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[26] Ibid., 15.

The response to this canon in Louisiana was that a correspondence was set up between the two existing parishes and attempts were made in 1833 and 1834 to have a convention. But the diocese of Alabama failed to send delegates and the Southwest Convention of 1833 did not meet.[27] These proposed conventions have caused some problems for previous writers on this subject because references indicated that conventions were to be held but no records were found of them. It can now be established through Vindication that they did not take place and that the failure of Alabama to meet and elect delegates was the main cause. It also explains why Bishop Brownell was so anxious to travel to Alabama on his second tour in 1834.[28]

Brownell was in accord with the vestry of Christ Church and was requested by them to go to Alabama and Mississippi to encourage their respective conventions to elect delegates to a third effort to establish the Southwestern Diocese.[29] He did this and was absent from the City of New Orleans when the competitive convention was held to establish Louisiana as a diocese. The Alabama convention met in Tuscaloosa on January 19, 1835, and "determined with great unanimity, to avail itself of the facilities afforded by the special Canon. . . ."[30] The author also referred to a letter written by Fox to Bishop Brownell in which he relates his ardent desire and untiring efforts to effect full implementation of the special canon.[31] Fox indicated a like desire to the vestry of Christ Church.[32] All parties concerned were making efforts to organize and elect a bishop in 1833-34 but by January 1835 the Henderson faction sought another way: by organizing the Diocese of Louisiana first. Before dealing with that, the pamphlet's author appealed to the readers to understand the need for a bishop. In the east where dioceses had been organized and given episcopal supervision, the Church had advanced rapidly, but in the Southwestern states the Church was static or declining.[33] In the entire three-state area there were only four priests regularly settled, or half the number found there in 1829. Episcopal supervision was needed to find priests and assign them to fields of labor. (The nature of historic Christianity is such that it cannot properly flourish without the supporting relationship of bishop-priest-laymen.) The bishop was "to strengthen their hands, encourage their hearts, and stimulate their zeal." The laymen are "to sympathize with them, and encourage them in their labors. . .."

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[27] Ibid., 5.

[28] Brownell's Journal, 320.

[29] Ibid., 321.

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[30] Vindication, 6.

[31] Ibid.

[32] James A. Fox, New Orleans, to Christ Church Vestry, May, 1833.

[33] Vindication, 7.

These scattered groups of churchmen had attempted, at great sacrifice of time and money, to implement the special canon. If the General Convention failed to accept their successful effort of March ". . . there remains not the slightest prospect of success of any future effort, or, indeed, that any future effort will be made."[34]

The author continued with an examination of the Brownell Convention and sought to defend its canonicity in accord with the General Convention's provision of 1832. The true intention of that canon was to provide a bishop for the three Southwestern states together when no one of them had sufficient strength to justify episcopal oversight alone. These were special circumstances and the General Convention made special provision in terms of a dispensing clause in the canon with the words "associate and join in the election of a bishop *anything in the Canons to the contrary not withstanding*."[35] This phrase had been criticized as doing away with all qualifications required for an episcopal election, since, the number of clergymen were not present in the proposed election. The question then arose at General Convention 1835 as to whom the terms "clergy of Louisiana" and the "Church of Louisiana" referred. In 1832 only Christ Church in New Orleans and Grace Church in St. Francisville were established with the Reverend Fathers James Hull and

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[34] *Vindication*, 8.

[35] *Ibid*., 9.

William Bowman in established pastoral relationships. Hence it was to these two priests and lay representatives of their respective parishes that the canon gave express grant under the special canon to elect a bishop. By 1835 Hull was dead and Bowman and the laymen from the two parishes were the only authorized delegates. James Fox and Raymond Henderson claimed to be "clergymen of Louisiana," and unjustly deprived of their seats in the General Convention. Actually, they never appeared to claim their seats nor were they entitled to them under the canons. As late as April, 1834, Fox was president of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mississippi. He had served Christ Church as a temporary priest at the pleasure of the wardens but this was not a pastoral charge under the canons. Neither did Fox have canonical residence in Louisiana because there was no diocesan organization there capable of receiving a letter dismissory under the provisions of Canon 35 of the General Convention. Clearly, Fox was not entitled to a seat or vote at the Southwest Convention. As to the Reverend Raymond Henderson, the fact provided equally clear evidence that he was likewise disqualified. He had gone, uninvited, to New Orleans to serve the French Evangelical Church which was not a part of the Diocese of Louisiana because the diocese did not exist. Henderson was canonically resident in the Diocese of Pennsylvania as assistant minister of the Swedish Churches near Philadelphia.[36] He was omitted from the Pennsylvania clergy list in 1835, which indicates he made a sincere claim to have received a letter dismissory to Louisiana, but under Canon 35 he could not be received in Louisiana; hence he was still attached to Pennsylvania. Henderson further lacked a pastoral relationship which would qualify him for a seat. The authorized delegates were, then, the Reverend William Bowman, and the laymen chosen by the two parishes.

The author of the Vindication then examined the Henderson convention of the clergy and parishes of Louisiana held on January 20, 1835. All the clergy then present in Louisiana and lay representatives of the two parishes were present and Bowman was elected president. While seeking independent diocesan status, first they did pass a resolution favoring the Southwestern Diocese.[37]

There was some uncertainty at the Henderson Convention as to the intentions of Alabama and Mississippi regarding this scheme. Alabama acted only one day prior to the January 20 meeting and Mississippi did nothing until February 24. The convention did seek to act under the special canon of 1832 for the election of a bishop but added the words "in the formation of a South Western Diocese." Since the said canon made no such provision, the delegates must have meant to equate the phrases "formation of a Southwestern Diocese" and "electing a bishop to preside over the Southwestern States." In this resolution the delegates laid aside their individual actions for representative action by the delegates thus named. Bowman was thus the clerical representative to the March convention and he chose not to attend. Six lay delegates from Christ Church did attend General Convention as stipulated by the resolution. They were, therefore, the only representatives of the Louisiana clergy and churches.

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[36] General Convention Journal, 1832, 510.

[37] Diocesan Journal, January, 1835.

The author answered a final objection to the Southwestern convention as having no precedent in the church: the Eastern Diocese, consisting of the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont, did in fact act corporately in the election of a bishop. Bishop Alexander V. Griswold was elected and certified by the General Convention.[38] This was the exact procedure used by the delegates to the Southwestern Convention in electing Hawkes to serve the Southwestern Diocese.[39]

This pamphlet was an able and convincing defense of the proceedings of the Brownell convention, but the opposition had created such a controversy in the church and secular press, that the members of the General Convention failed to take notice of the book. With the declination of Hawkes, the scheme for a Southwestern Diocese collapsed.

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[38] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 213.

[39] Vindication, 24.

Again, churchmen in Louisiana were divided into two groups, each seeking the same end but by entirely different means. They canceled each other's efforts out and postponed the desired diocese with episcopal supervision. By design of its Founder the Church is one and in its essential nature is a Body which must be a unit in itself. Where unity is lacking the purposes for which the Church was founded are not fulfilled and its efforts are wasted. Three more years were to pass before Louisiana Episcopalians could find this unity and reach their desired goal. Word had evidently reached the assembled delegates of the national church that Louisiana had divided into factions in her efforts to form a diocese, yet the bishops of General Convention nominated Hawkes as Bishop of Louisiana and of the territories of Arkansas and Florida. To add further confusion, the House of Deputies elected him Bishop of Arkansas and Florida with no mention of Louisiana. Joseph Lovell was one of the lay deputies to the General Convention in 1835 and sought to persuade Hawkes to come to accept his election.[40] He related his conversation with Hawkes to Relf and Wilman. Although Hawkes had been elected bishop over the churches in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Florida, missionary funds were insufficient to provide for his full salary. To supplement this, Lovell was authorized to offer him $3,000.00 per year for five months' service as rector of Christ Church. The bishop-elect was reluctant to commit that much time to one parish but offered to serve as best he could for $1,500.00. Lovell could not accept such a proposition without vestry approval and Hawkes after consultation with the Missionary Society declined the election.[41] It was probably well that he did as the project of giving adequate supervision to such a large geographic area and to such a small number of scattered parishes would have been impossible. Nevertheless, Bishop Brownell who had labored so long for episcopal care for the churches in the Southwest called Hawkes' declination a disgrace.[42] At the same time Brownell suggested Dr. Jonathan A. Wainwright of Boston as a prospective rector for Christ Church and bishop for the area.[43] After considerable deliberation Wainright declined the election and Louisiana waited three more years for a bishop.[44]

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[40] J. Lovell, New York, to Richard Relf and R. M. Welman, November 27, 1835.

The General Convention replaced the Canon of 1832 with a realistic approach to opening new areas of the expanding United States for the work of the Church. Missionary areas were put directly under the supervision of the National Church and missionary bishops were appointed by the

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Thomas Church Brownell, Middletown, Connecticut, to J. Lovell, October 14, 1835.

[43] Ibid.

[44] General Convention Journal, 1835, 714.

House of Bishops. It was under this new canon that Hawkes was elected. Although he refused, the way was open for an election in 1838 for the Louisiana group.[45]

The failure of the church in Louisiana to take unified action on the proposition of forming a diocese, or of joining the diocese of Alabama and Mississippi as an unorganized diocese in the Southwestern Diocese scheme, caused the 1835 General Convention to postpone recognition of the Diocese of Louisiana for another three years. The Canon of 1832 was probably to blame, if indeed blame can be placed, for the development of the factions which worked against each other.

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[45] Ibid., 650.

# CHAPTER VI

# LOUISIANA'S OTHER EPISCOPAL PARISHES

The events of 1835 presented tremendous disappointments to the churchmen in New Orleans. Their two conventions had failed to form a diocese and the man who was elected bishop did not see fit to accept. But these failures were to be turned into successes within the next three years. During the years 1835-1838, the Church in Louisiana had the presence of not one but two bishops, a new parish was founded in New Orleans, and their numbers grew through the influx of Americans to the state. More important was the convention held in 1838 which was successful in establishing the diocese.

On the national level, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1835 initiated a great missionary effort, for it authorized the consecration of bishops for the new areas which were opening in the West. Jackson Kemper was the first priest to be made a bishop under the new policy. He was given oversight of the Northwest Territory, and, one of Kemper's first efforts as bishop was to establish a medical college at St. Louis for which he undertook a fund-raising trip to the Southwest. Kemper landed in New Orleans on February 10, 1838, and found the Episcopal Church in poor condition. Dr. Nathaniel Wheaton had been elected rector but had not prepared any candidates for confirmation.[1] On the third Sunday after Easter he instituted Wheaton as rector but noted that he "is more liked in the poorhouses than in the pulpit." He noted the beginnings of a second parish in New Orleans and the need for four or five more. Bishop Kemper visited the churchmen in New Orleans and made every effort to tend them with pastoral concern and the sacrament. While there he exercised episcopal oversight of the Church in Louisiana and helped the people to find some unity of purpose in their efforts to establish the diocese.[2]

Bishop Brownell returned to Louisiana for the third time in the spring of 1836.[3] He found that the Episcopalians were working hard on the local level to revive church life after their efforts had failed on the diocesan level. Christ Church had conducted a successful building campaign and occupied their new church building in 1836. Bishop Brownell, acting under the authority of the General Convention as Provisional Bishop of the Southwest, consecrated the new Christ Church, which was built in the Grecian style.[4]

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[1] Diary of the Right Reverend Jackson Kemper, W.P.A. File 55, Louisiana State Library, Baton Rouge.

[2] Kemper Diary.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Thomas C. Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest," in The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, VII (December, 1938), 1.

Brownell commented on the condition of the Church in Louisiana in his annual address to his own convention in Connecticut. "The non-acceptance of the Bishop elect, together with some other untoward events, has indeed spread a dark cloud over the dawning prospects of the Church in this interesting portion of our country."[5] The "untoward events" were certainly the two competitive and mutually destructive Louisiana conventions, and the unfortunate results in the General Convention.

Joseph Lovell, who had attended the Philadelphia meeting, also bewailed the languishing condition of the churches in his area:

> How can the apathy of our Church be accounted for in relation to this immense South Western region? We have here . . . seven or eight organizations - with Churches erected and consecrated, and yet with no pastor in either to break to the anxious and longing Communicants the Bread of Life! We have besides twenty situations where congregations could be immediately organized and our Church planted, had we only a few faithful and zealous clergymen.[6]

Lovell also noted that there was only one priest ministering to the Episcopalians in all the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and that was in Mobile. Fox had left New Orleans after his forced resignation on March 2, 1835, and for the time was farming. William Bowman, the rector of

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[5] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 56.

[6] Joseph Lovell, New Orleans, to Foreign Mission Committee, December, 1835. Quoted in Carter, So Great A Good, 40.

Grace Church in St. Francisville, died on August 30, 1835, and there was no clergyman to take his place.[7] The vestry of Christ Church again appealed to their friend Bishop Brownell,

> . . . and respectfully solicit him to add to the many favors already conferred by him on the Congregation of this Church--by visiting us the ensuing winter--with the two-fold purpose of consecrating our new Church--and supply the vacancy still existing in the rectorship.[8]

Meanwhile, the vestry had appealed again to their episcopal friend for assistance in finding a new rector. They selected the Reverend Dr. John Johns of Baltimore, and offered him a salary of $4,000 per year, again through the good offices of Bishop Brownell.[9] Dr. Johns chose not to come and hence the appeal to the bishop to winter with them once again.

Temporary services were rendered to the church in New Orleans in the winter of 1835-36 by the Reverend John T. Wheat, who, while priest of the Episcopal parish in Marietta, Ohio, had contracted smallpox and was given leave by his bishop to come South to regain his health. Christ Church was in the process of building and he ministered in an abandoned Lutheran Church on Rampart Street, and later in rented quarters on Lafayette Square. While Wheat was in New Orleans, the vestry continued their search for a permanent rector and commissioned J. Lovell to head the committee. Some of the parishioners were so pleased with Wheat that a petition was circulated requesting the vestry to call him. The vote was 18 for, 3 opposed, 9 abstained, and 10 were absent; no action was taken on this request.[10] Wheat meanwhile had ingratiated himself with Episcopalians in the upper part of the city which relationship led to the formation of a second Episcopal Church in New Orleans.

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[7] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 69.

[8] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church, New Orleans, October 6, 1836. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

[9] Vestry Minutes, December 3, 1835.

In 1836 the population in the American section of the city was increasing rapidly but the church was not growing with the population. A number of the citizens wanted the service of the Church and saw the need for spiritual guidance and places of worship. Some of them addressed a plea to the Domestic Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church.[11]

> In view of the present great and growing wants of this city in relation to a provision in spiritual things, we beg leave to ask the immediate attention of the Domestic Committee to fixing upon this city as a Missionary station. . . . The members of the Episcopal Church here are particularly anxious for the appointment of an able, middle aged, and judicious Missionary to the inhabitants for the upper part of the city.[12]

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[10] Vestry Minutes, May 13, 1836.

[11] The Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church was responsible for creating and supporting mission stations and its work into Domestic and Foreign Committees. The board published a monthly magazine throughout the period under consideration called The Spirit of Missions. It contained letters from missionaries, official reports, and other missionary business.

[12] Letter from several gentlemen at New Orleans to the Domestic Committee in Spirit of Missions (August, 1836), 230.

These gentlemen pointed to the opportunities for the founding of a new parish and to subscriptions already made for its support.

Another episcopal visitor came to the aid of the Church in Louisiana in early 1836 on behalf of the Domestic Committee. The bishop of Tennessee, James H. Otey, came to New Orleans via St. Francisville where he had a pleasant visit as guest of Judge Thomas Butler. The parish in St. Francisville had conducted no services since Bowman's death.[13] The brick building was still incomplete inside, but funds were available if a priest could be found. Bishop Otey journeyed to New Orleans and met Father Wheat whom he had earlier urged to come to settle in Tennessee. He recorded this in his diary: "When, however, I reached New Orleans and saw the state of things in that growing and wealthy city, and the pressing need for the services of an Episcopal minister, I felt duty bound to urge him to remain."[14] The vestry of Christ Church were anxious to have some continuity of priestly ministration and wanted Wheat to remain. Bishop Otey felt Wheat was the man to bring increase to the New Orleans church group and described him thus:

> To great activity and zeal in the duties of his

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[13] Bishop James H. Otey, Columbia, Tennessee, to Domestic Committee, May 2, 1836, in Spirit of Missions (May, 1836), 145.

[14] Ibid., May 1836.

> profession, he unites so much practical knowledge about men and things, as will give him decided advantages, and much help in the occupancy of a very difficult and responsible situation.[15]

Later, on his visit to New Orleans Bishop Otey confirmed a class prepared by Wheat. Bishop Brownell, on his third visit, also commended Wheat's work:

> The congregations have been uniformly large and attentive, and I have no doubt that, with the labors of a pious and faithful pastor, the specious church now erecting will soon be entirely filled.[16]

Of several agents of the Domestic Committee who went on fund-raising tours, one was the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Dorr of Philadelphia.[17] The visitor was surprised by a gift of over three thousand dollars. Wheat's chance meeting with the traveling secretary led to his appointment in October, 1836, as a missionary in the upper part of New Orleans, the first such appointment in Louisiana by the newly-revised Missionary Society.

> Office of Domestic Mission
> 115 Frank Street
> New York. Oct. 13, 1836
>
> Rev. and Dear Brother:
>
> It affords me great pleasure to transmit to you the enclosed extract from the minutes of the last meeting of the committee for Domestic Missions. You

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[15] *Ibid*., May, 1836.

[16] Thomas C. Brownell, New Orleans, to Domestic Secretary, April 5, 1836, in *Spirit of Missions* (April, 1936), 101.

[17] John Wheat, Salisbury, North Carolina, to Herman C. Duncan, January 10, 1885. Manuscript in possession of author.

> will perceive that the Committee has appointed you missionary to the upper part of New Orleans appropriating to you a salary of one thousand dollars for one year. The representations which have been made to this Committee induce them to believe that New Orleans will sustain this mission as soon as sufficient interest in its behalf can be awakened there and the proper effort can be concentrated to that object. The committee earnestly hope (sic) that you will regard this as the call of duty and will enter upon a field of labor of peculiar importance and promising great usefulness to the souls of peculiar men. The testimonials alluded to in the minutes of the committee is that of your diocesan required by the eleventh article of the constitution of this society.
>
> Very respectfully and truly
> your friend and brother.
> James D. Carder
> Local Secretary, C.D.M.[18]

This was the beginning of St. Paul's Church, the third parish founded in New Orleans. Wheat accepted the commission and moved his family to New Orleans from Columbia, Tennessee, where he had been on vacation.[19] Since Christ Church was the only parish in New Orleans, its boundaries under the canons were those of the city. Before the new parish could be chartered, permission had to be granted by the existing parish. Wheat received permission from the vestry with the lower limit of the new parish being Delord Street.[20] Services began in a rented room near Tivoli Circle and from the beginning St. Paul's had a respectable congregation. One reason for this was given by Wheat: "Several young men of staunch churchmanship and ardent personal piety, with whom I had become intimate during my first visit rallied to my support."[21] Among these churchmen were William F. Brand, who was later ordained and who distinguished himself as a priest, Major Grayson, U.S.A., later an army general, and Judge Thomas N. Morgan. Charles Goodrich was a student at the Theological Seminary in Alexandria and home on a visit. Goodrich rendered valuable aid in initiating this parish and succeeded in bringing his brother-in-law into the Church with the support of his former pastor. The church was soon moved to Julia Street and finally to Camp Street, where it was named St. Paul's and where it remained for over one hundred years. The group elected wardens and vestrymen and received pledges of $40,000 for the construction of a church, but the financial crisis of 1837 prevented payment and the building plans were indefinitely postponed. At this time Wheat was asked to go to Christ Church, Nashville, by Bishop Otey, and he accepted the offer, first recommending Goodrich as his successor. William F. Brand represented the parish of St. Paul at the convention in 1838 when the Diocese of Louisiana was finally organized.

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[18] James D. Carder, New York, to John Wheat, October 13, 1836. Manuscript in possession of author.

[19] Wheat to Duncan, January 10, 1885.

[20] Vestry Minutes, November 20, 1836, December 20, 1836.

Thirty-three years had passed since Philander Chase celebrated the English Liturgy for the members of Christ Church as they worshipped together for the first time in the

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[21] Wheat to Duncan, January 10, 1835.

Cabildo. Christ Church had a continuous life during these years but not always under the ministry of a priest. Only two rectors had served, Chase and Hull, but the parish received the benefit of several visiting clergy including Bishop Brownell's three visitations and one from Bishop Otey. The vestry called Dr. Hawkes of New York, twice, and Dr. Johns of Baltimore once, but both declined and from the death of Dr. Hull in 1833 there was no formally instituted rector until 1837. On his third and final visitation, Bishop Brownell was accompanied by the Reverend Dr. Nathanial S. Wheaton, who, like the bishop, had been president of Trinity College in Hartford. Upon the bishop's recommendation Wheaton was called as rector on January 13, 1837, and was offered $5,000 per year.[22] At the same meeting the vestry decided to examine all financial claims against the parish and sell all remaining pews to the public in order to pay these debts. Bishop Brownell, who apparently healed the wounds which remained from the conflicting conventions, turned the parish over to Wheaton as a unified group. In gratitude the vestry proposed to give the bishop $1,200 salary for his most recent services but had second thoughts and instead voted to buy him three silver pitchers at a price not to exceed $250.[23]

In November, Wheaton returned to New Orleans with his family but did not formally accept the call until April, 1838, just prior to the General Convention. He was instituted as rector of Christ Church on April 3, 1838, by the Right Reverend Jackson Kemper, D.D.[24] Bishop Kemper, the first missionary bishop elected by the General Convention of 1835, was on a fund-raising tour.[25]

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[22] Vestry Minutes, February 13, 1837.

[23] Vestry Minutes, March 23, 1837.

St. Paul's Church had been organized in the upper suburb (Fauxbourg) of the city but languished after the resignation of Wheat in July 1837. The lay leadership of the parish retained the organization intact until a new priest came in the fall of 1838.

Two other efforts were made to found parishes in the 1830's. The Reverend Raymond Henderson had sought to associate a group of French Protestants with the Episcopal Church. The convention in January, 1835, agreed to admit it into union with the convention upon their accession to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church under the name of the "Church De La Résurrection."[26] This group, however, was Calvinistic in theology and followed a non-liturgical pattern, hence the liturgy and theology of the Episcopal Church were unacceptable and the group did not accede to canons although a nebulous relationship continued until the 1850's.

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[24] Jackson Kemper, New Orleans, to Domestic Secretary, May 5, 1838 in Spirit of Missions (July, 1838), 200.

[25] Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America in a General Convention, Held in the City of Philadelphia, From Wednesday, August 19th, to September 1st, Inclusive, A.D., 1835. Journals of the General Conventions from 1785 to 1835 were compiled in William S. Perry, A Half Century of the Legislation of the American Church (2 vols.; Claremont, N. H., 1874), 1,676. Hereinafter cited as General Convention Journal.

Another small group was founded in the heat of controversy by James Fox after he lost out at Christ Church. On April 19, 1835, he founded "Trinity Church on Lafayette Square" which continued until the following September when it disbanded. The parishioners consisted solely of women and were undoubtedly a small group of personal admirers of the sort who inevitably attach themselves to controversial figures.[27]

The only other bona fide parish in the State of Louisiana was the small Grace Church parish in St. Francisville. Founded by the Reverend William R. Bowman in 1827, the parish had grown slowly due to the rector's ill health. The parish had been represented at the convention in 1830 which attempted to organize the diocese, and in January, 1835, E. H. Barton represented Grace Church with its "eight or ten communicants." After Bowman's death in August, 1835, the church was served briefly by several priests including the Reverend R. H. Ranney who was rector in 1838.

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[26] Journal of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Louisiana, held in Christ Church, New Orleans, Tuesday, January 20, 1835, 7. Hereinafter cited as Diocesan Journal.

[27] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 28.

Thus, the three recognized parishes of Christ Church, St. Paul's, and Grace were the only Louisiana parishes in existence as the General Convention drew near in the fall of 1838. In the eight years before, conventions had been held or attempted on at least five occasions; constitutions and canons for diocesan structure had been drawn up three times. A bishop had been elected and had declined, but bishops had visited the Churches in Louisiana on five occasions. The churchmen in Louisiana found it difficult to organize as an ecclesiastical associate of their sister states of Mississippi and Alabama, and in 1838 it set out once again to organize, but this time as an independent diocese seeking union with the General Convention.

Three organized churches was a small number to apply for union with the General Convention, but the potential for growth was great. In the years pursuant to the Louisiana Purchase and the admittance of the State of Louisiana, the population had increased greatly. Cotton plantations had developed in the central and northern parts of the State and the sugar plantations in the south had increased in number and extent. Urban areas had grown in addition to New Orleans and among the newcomers to both plantation and city were Episcopalians or people amenable to Anglican ways of faith and practice. The author of the Vindication pointed to the cause of the failure of the church to grow:

> The deficiency is mainly owing to the want of Episcopal superintendence; to the want of some persons whose appropriate business should be to seek for suitable clergymen, and fix them in proper locations, and clothed with authority to do this without incurring the imputation of meddling with what does not belong to him.[28]

The person of bishop is the center about which the clergy, laity and diocesan life find their sense of unity and purpose as functioning cell of the Body of Christ. Where there is no bishop, there is no semblance of diocesan life or growth and this absence was deeply felt in Louisiana. Fertile fields for the Church's work lay idle until the bishop came.

Some of these opportunities for growth were pointed up by Bishop Brownell after his first journey to Louisiana in 1830:

> April 28, 1830
> Hartford
>
> There is no doubt but churches may be established at many places in Louisiana, by Missionary exertions. I am informed that the principal people of Baton Rouge are Episcopalians, and that they are now supporting a Presbyterian clergyman, for the want of one of their own communion. There are also several Episcopalians at Donaldsonville, which is now the capitol of the State. Missionaries might be profitably established at both these stations. Or if but one missionary can be sent, they may be included within the same cure.

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[28] A Vindication of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church Composed of Delegations from the Dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama and the Clergy and Churches of Louisiana, Held in Christ Church in the City of New Orleans, on the 4th and 5th Days of March, A.D., 1835, 6. Hereinafter cited as Vindication.

> Missionaries are said to be greatly needed westward of the Mississippi, at Alexandria, on the Red River, at Opelousas, and at St. Martinsville and Franklin, on the Teche. A gentleman residing about forty miles below New applied to me for a clergyman; offering himself to give sixty acres of valuable land for a gleve, and informing me that his neighbors were ready to unite with him in erecting on it a good brick Church and parsonage. I beg leave to recommend this station to the particular attention of the Society. If a clergyman shall be sent to this place who is willing to take charge of a few pupils, he would find a liberal support without any Missionary allowance.
>
> The Rev. Mr. Wall, whom I met at New Orleans, went by my advice to Franklin, in the district of Attakapas, with a view of engaging in the business of instruction. The Rev. Mr. Fox was residing in New Orleans, and intended to resume the charge of a parish this spring.[29]

Bishop Kemper likewise expressed the need in the northeastern part of the state and spoke of his intention to go to Lake Providence and other places on his missionary tour.[30]

The Louisiana group said they sought diocesan status and the ministry of a bishop not for their own sake but for the sake of the mission of the Church to bring the Gospel to all men. The General Convention of 1835 had given great impetus to the idea of mission and its implementation, but its direction was to send men to Persia and Greece! Joseph Lovell rejoiced in this but pleaded that priests also be sent to the Southwest.[31] Before a bishop could be sent to bring the

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[29] Thomas C. Brownell, Hartford, Conn., to Domestic Committee, April 20, 1830, in Spirit of Missions (November, 1851), 1.

[30] Jackson Kemper, New Orleans, to Domestic Secretary, May 5, 1838, Spirit of Missions (July, 1838), 200.

[31] Joseph Lovell to Foreign Mission Committee, December, 1835.

Apostolic ministry to the church in Louisiana the church must first organize. Churchmen of New Orleans set out once more to do this by passing a resolution calling for diocesan organization.[32]

The vestry of Christ Church once again took the initiative in organizing the Louisiana Diocese. Lucius Duncan offered the following vestry resolution which was unanimously adopted:

> Whereas, it is expedient that a Convention be held for the purpose of organizing the Protestant Episcopal Church in Louisiana into an independent Diocese,
>
> Resolved, That this church do appoint delegates to attend a Convention to be held at such time and place as it may be mutually agreed upon, with full power, in conjunction with the Delegates from the other Churches in Louisiana to adopt a Constitution of the Diocese, and to take all such measures as may be necessary to procure its admission to and union with the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America.[33]

Dr. Wheaton had written a formal letter to the vestry accepting the rectorship of Christ Church at the same meeting. Although he had been in residence for some time, he had wanted a trial period for himself and for the lay authorities of the Church.[34] It was apparently acceptable to the vestry, as he was unanimously approved and was asked to represent Christ Church along with Richard Relf and L. C. Duncan at the proposed Louisiana convention.[35]

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[32] Vestry Minutes, April 20, 1838.

[33] Vestry Minutes, April 30, 1838.

[34] John Wheat to Christ Church Vestry, New Orleans, April 20, 1838. Manuscript in possession of author.

This gathering had obviously been anticipated by the three parishes, as it met exactly eight days later. A "Convention of Clergy and Churches in the State of Louisiana" was held in Christ Church, New Orleans, on April 28, 1838, for "the purpose of organizing the said churches into an independent diocese."[36] Finally, after the collapse of all other methods of organization, the Church people in Louisiana got together simply, described themselves accurately, and set out to formulate the basic documents for a diocese. This effort lacked all the complications of interdiocesan involvements and, fortunately, it lacked too the polemics of Henderson and Fox. The approach this time was straightforward: organize the diocese with constitution and canons, ask for union with the General Convention, and then request episcopal supervision. The latter step was wisely postponed until the diocese was formed and accepted by the national body.

The convention began, as do all councils of the Church, with "appropriate divine service performed by the Reverend Dr. Wheaton." Presumably, this was the Eucharist. Wheaton was also elected to the chair of the convention and William F. Brand of St. Paul's parish was appointed secretary. Others present by resolution of their respective vestries were: the Honourable Thomas Butler, James Turner, and William D. Boyle of Grace Church, St. Francisville; Richard Relf and Lucius C. Duncan of Christ Church were also present.[37] Father Ranney and Thomas Butler were commissioned to draft a constitution and report back to the convention. From the records it appears that the committee reported at once, which indicates they either came prepared or were able to model this constitution after that of another diocese.[38]

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[35] Vestry Minutes, April 20, 1838.

[36] _Diocesan Journal_, 1838, 1.

The constitution contained eight articles in which the polity and general principles of Anglicanism were clearly and carefully followed. Since this constitution was to be submitted to the forthcoming General Convention, the delegates wanted to make certain that it was an acceptable apostolic constitution. Foremost among the safeguards was the provision for the accession to the Constitution of the Episcopal Church and the acknowledgment of its authority, a point often overlooked by local leaders in later years. Articles two and three designated the time, place, officer, and eligible delegates of the diocesan convention and that, as in all other dioceses of the American Church, laymen and clergy would be equally represented. Clergy and laity would vote in one body except in the election of a bishop when the clergy were authorized to nominate "some fit and qualified person," who after approval of the laity, would be declared elected. Provision was also made for appointing a standing committee of three priests and three laymen and for appointing delegates to General Convention. On the motion of Lucius Duncan this constitution was accepted as the founding constitution of the Diocese of Louisiana.[39]

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[37] _Ibid_., 2.

[38] _Ibid_., 5.

The next step was to have the constitution presented and accepted by the General Convention, and for this honor Dr. Wheaton, Father Ranney, Thomas Butler, Lucius C. Duncan, Joseph Lovell, and George Lawrie were elected delegates. James Colles and William F. Frand were appointed alternates in the event of the absence of one or more of the delegates.[40] The responsibility for drawing up canon law for the government of the church was given to the standing committee composed of Wheaton, Ranney and Messrs. Duncan, Butler and Relf. Finally, the convention ordered that its proceedings should be printed as a journal for which Christ Church paid the bill.[41]

This uncomplicated approach to attaining diocesan status avoided both the infighting which had characterized previous efforts and the difficulties of joint action with two other dioceses. The problems which had beset the Louisiana group grew out of the failure of the special Canon of 1832 to recognize Louisiana as a diocese, but the point has often been overlooked that the Louisiana group never sought simple diocesan status: their efforts had always been directed primarily to obtaining a bishop--and rightly so--but they failed to understand that a bishop must have a diocese. The events of 1830-1838 finally convinced Louisiana Episcopalians that they must be a recognized diocese in union with the national governing body of the Church before episcopal provision could be made. In the convention of April 28, 1838, this essential step was taken; nothing more could be done but wait for the General Convention to act upon the application for union which would be presented by the elected delegates.

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[39] Ibid., 7.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Vestry Minutes, June 30, 1838.

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in Philadelphia from September 5 to 17, 1839. This was the third meeting of this national body in which delegates from the churches in Louisiana sought diocesan status. The memorial from the April gathering in New Orleans was presented by Dr. Wheaton and Joseph Lovell, who were the only two delegates present.[42] It was received in both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, the latter of which acted first upon the Louisiana request. The Reverend William Cooper Mead was chairman of the Committee on New Dioceses which examined the request for union as well as the proposed Constitution of the Diocese of Louisiana.[43] On September 7, 1838, Mead reported to the House of Deputies

> . . . that it appears from the Journal of the

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[42] General Convention Journal, 1838, 6-7.

[43] Ibid., 18.

> Convention of the Clergy and Churches in the State of Louisiana, that the Church in the said state of Louisiana, that the Church in the said State accedes to the Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and acknowledges its authority, according to the 5th Article of the Church, and therefore recommends the passage of the following resolution: Resolved, The House of Bishops concurring, that the Diocese of Louisiana be received into union with the General Convention.[44]

At nine o'clock the next morning the House of Bishops assembled with the Deputies for the liturgy at St. Peter's Church after which the bishops went into their separate meetings in the vestry room. Presiding at this meeting was the Right Reverend Alexander Viets Griswold of the Eastern Diocese who, as senior bishop, was the President Bishop of the Church. On motion of Bishops Bowe, Ives, and Kemper the bishops concurred with the deputies and Louisiana became a diocese.[45]

The Diocese of Louisiana was an official unit of the Church in America thirty-three years after the first Episcopal priest came to New Orleans and twenty-six years after Louisiana became a state. In the thirty-five years since the Louisiana Purchase the westward movement of population in Louisiana had grown from 50,000 to 250,000.[46] This growth was not reflected in the extension of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana nor in the other growing western states. Yet there was sufficient growth in terms of the addition of new dioceses to cause the General Convention of 1838 to revise its machinery and re-define its standards for admitting new dioceses. A minimum land area of eight thousand square miles and thirty priests of one year's residency was required for a new diocese.[47] The church was growing rapidly in some states and provision was made for dividing dioceses into smaller units for better administration and more carefully supervised growth. The problem of Louisiana in seeking diocesan status was not unique. In the future the church would send missionaries into new territories to begin new churches with the resources of the General Convention. When they reached sufficient strength for self support a diocese could be formed. The story of the churchmen in Louisiana and their feeble efforts to form themselves into a diocese without mission help would not be repeated. The young diocese did in fact receive missionaries in order to help it grow, which perhaps came as a result of the report on the state of the Church in Louisiana for 1838:

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[44] Ibid., 20.

[45] Ibid., 93.

[46] Edwin A. Davis, Louisiana, A Narrative History (Baton Rouge, 1961), 120-21.

> The Church in Louisiana having been but recently organised, little statistical information has been collected in reference to it. It contains three organized Parishes, viz. two in the City of New Orleans, and one at St. Francisville. Christ Church at New Orleans, which has been for several years without a stated Rector, is not supplied, and is in a flourishing state, with about 150 communicants. St. Paul's Church in the Upper Fauxbourg, is at present vacant, but with a prospect of being soon

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[47] General Convention Journal, 1838, 24.

> supplied. A rector has been recently appointed to Grace Church in St. Francisville, which is supposed to be in prosperous condition.[48]

The 1838 General Convention took one further step which was to have tremendous significance for the diocese of Louisiana. Like other Southern and Western dioceses, it was now organized but had no bishop, nor was there provision under the canons to provide missionary bishops for a diocese. Dr. Wheaton and Joseph Lovell joined the Diocese of Georgia and the delegates from Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida in petitioning the Convention to make such provision.[49] A solution was found by creating a missionary bishop for Arkansas and allowing him to extend his jurisdiction to other dioceses who had no bishops and who might request his oversight. A specific request must be made and Louisiana was to do this in its first diocesan convention. The House of Bishops then proceeded "after spending some time in silent prayer" to choose by ballot the Reverend Leonidas Polk of Tennessee to be the Missionary Bishop of Arkansas.[50]

Eight years of persistent and often frustrating work culminated in this convention with the acceptance of the clergy and parishes in Louisiana as a bona fide diocese of the Episcopal Church.

The canons were also amended to provide for episcopal oversight in terms of a "Provisional Bishop in the Person of the Missionary Bishop of Arkansas." This would give a weak new diocese like Louisiana sufficient leadership for growth until the diocese was strong enough to call and support its own full-time bishop. In this convention were not only fulfilled the efforts of eight years under the fatherly hand of Bishop Brownell but the dreams of the small group who had met at Madame Forager's in 1805. Their desire to have an English church was fulfilled with the formation of the Diocese of Louisiana, the first non-Roman ecclesiastical organization of any Christian communion to be formed in Louisiana. Although other non-Roman churches had parish churches, no other religious group had as large a unit of the church as the diocese.

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[48] Ibid., 67. [49] Ibid., 100. [50] Ibid., 114.

In 1805 there were no organized churchmen in Louisiana, but by 1838 three parishes were functioning in New Orleans and one in St. Francisville. Another was forming in Baton Rouge, and groups of Episcopalians in other parts of the state were rapidly coming together. The careful work of Philander Chase and James Hull gave to the infant church a positive stamp of orthodoxy in spite of the fact that most of the people had seemed unconcerned about it in the earlier days. The Episcopal Church in Louisiana came into being primarily because these two men insisted that the Catholic concept of polity, discipline and worship be followed without deviation. If these men had been uncertain in their views of the church, a pan-protestant group would have come into being rather than the Episcopal Church.

An element of discord was also present in the young church's efforts to form a diocesan organization. This was largely a result of the Episcopal Church's lack of organization on the national level. It was not until 1835 that official steps were taken to extend the church into the new areas of the country. Therefore, if the church were to be founded in such a place as Louisiana, a local effort was necessary. The real difficulty arose because the people on the local scene were ill equipped to do the job and had no precedent to follow. The events of the years 1830-1838 can then be interpreted as years of trial and error, which nevertheless resulted in diocesan organization.

The careful and persistent work of the faithful group of priests and laymen in Louisiana brought the scattered parishes and churchmen into a unified body and made possible the work of the next twenty-three years. Having succeeded in the formation of a diocese, regular annual meetings were then established in "diocesan conventions." The first meeting of the organized diocese, held in Christ Church, New Orleans, on January 16, 1839, requested that the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk, Missionary Bishop of Arkansas, take charge and assume authority over the Diocese of Louisiana.[51] This began an episcopate in Louisiana which was to last until the Civil War. With the coming of Bishop Polk, the organization was complete and the Church in Louisiana was ready to undertake missionary activity of its own. Bishop Polk organized parishes in every area of the diocese and increased the number of priests and laymen many times over. Thus, John Watson's desire to have an English Church in New Orleans had begun a movement which led to the full establishment of the Episcopal Church in every part of the State of Louisiana.

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[51] Diocesan Journal, 1839, 1.

## CHAPTER VII

## PROVISIONAL EPISCOPATE FOR THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA

Since, as Missionary Bishop of Arkansas Leonidas Polk's jurisdiction could be extended to the Diocese of Louisiana, his election to that office was of great significance to Louisiana Episcopalians.[1] The first convention of the new diocese was held in Christ Church, New Orleans, on Wednesday, January 16, 1839, and its essential business was to request this extension of his jurisdiction:

> On the motion of Mr. Duncan, it was unanimously Resolved, That the Diocese of Louisiana be and hereby is placed under full Episcopal charge and authority of the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk, D.D., Missionary Bishop of Arkansas agreeable to the provisions of the 3rd Canon of the General Convention of 1838; and that he be respectfully requested to accept the same.[2]

A Standing Committee was organized with Dr. N. S. Wheaton as president who was further charged by the convention to transmit the above resolution to Bishop Polk and "to express the earnest hope of this convention that he will take Episcopal oversight of this Diocese."[3]

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[1] Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in a General Convention Held in the City of Philadelphia, From September 5, to September 17, Inclusive, A.D., 1838 (New York, 1838), 78. Hereinafter cited as General Convention Journal.

[2] Journal of the First Convention of the Diocese of Louisiana, Held in Christ Church, New Orleans, on Wednesday, the 16th January, 1839, 8. Hereinafter cited as Diocesan Journal.

Lucius Duncan had been charged with the responsibility for drawing up a set of canons for the diocese in the founding convention. His report was read and accepted by the convention without dissent, and the organization of the diocese was then complete. These canons were only six in number and were entirely adequate for the government of a diocese as small as that in Louisiana in 1839.

Provision was made in Canon I for the most essential and pressing need of the Louisiana diocese, the organization of new parishes. At that time there were only three parishes and two clergy in Louisiana, and if the Episcopal Church was to fulfill its mission many new parishes would have to be organized. Assurance was written into this law that such parishes fully adhere "to the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention."[4] The provision excluded the French Church which was Calvinistic in theology, congregational in polity, and non-liturgical in practice. To be a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church a parish must be Catholic in theology, accept apostolic constitutions, and worship liturgically according to the American use in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Nevertheless, the French Church continued in some sort of relationship with the diocese for years.

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[3] *Ibid.*, 6

[4] *Ibid.*, 5.

Canons II and IV dealt with parish organization and record keeping as required by the General Convention. To make certain that orderly procedure is used in parish affairs, the Church provides guidelines in her laws which govern the clergy and laity. Canons III, V, and VI delineated the diocesan organization stipulating an annual convention, the standing committee to transact business between conventions, and financial provision for this embryonic diocesan organization.

The diocese, fully organized, in union with the American Church, awaited word from Bishop Polk regarding his election. His answer came in less than one month: in a letter addressed to Dr. Wheaton he asked that "you accept my cordial thanks; with assurance that I accede to the wishes of the Convention with much pleasure."[5] The Louisiana churchmen must have felt exuberant and hopeful with their diocese a reality and a bishop in charge at last. Bishop Polk's acceptance of responsibility in Louisiana marked a shift in the nature of church life in Louisiana. What had been, prior to 1838, "the clergy and churches in the State of Louisiana," was now the Diocese of Louisiana and Bishop Polk. Efforts of Louisiana churchmen had lacked direction, and their energies had been expended in largely unproductive attempts at organization. The diocese would now provide an organization and the bishop a center around which a united effort could be gathered to expand the Church in Louisiana. The next twenty-three years were to see the infant diocese prosper and grow under the dynamic leadership of Leonidas Polk. This man was to leave his peculiar mark not only on the Episcopal Church in Louisiana but on the wider scene of American history when he left his diocese to become a Confederate general. The life of the diocese was one with the life of Leonidas Polk until his death and each must be examined to understand the other.

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[5] Leonidas Polk, Columbia, Tennessee, to John Wheaton, February 14, 1839 in Diocesan Journal, 1839, 4.

As we have seen, Bishop Brownell had directed attention to the possibilities of church expansion in Louisiana on his visit in 1829. He visited first the newly-organized parish in St. Francisville and found there a Church "of brick, a neat edifice, and finished all but plastering" where the Reverend William Bowman was ministering "with encouraging prospects of success."[6] He was later informed that his visit had so encouraged the people that $1,000 was raised to pay the debts. He then called in New Orleans and presided at the first effort to organize a diocese at Christ Church. It was after this meeting that he summarized what he felt to be the best prospects for a new parish in Louisiana.

Americans were rapidly coming into Louisiana and availing themselves of the fertile farm land from the delta below New Orleans to the Red River lands in the area of Caddo Parish. Among the new arrivals were many churchmen of means who came from Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Tennessee, bringing with them their families, slaves, household goods, and all the implements for building and operating large plantations of cotton and sugar cane.[7] Some of them brought with them their religion which they were accustomed to practice according to the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop Brownell testified in 1829, as Bishop Polk was to reaffirm ten years later, that there were many centers where these churchpeople were eager to establish Episcopal Churches, often with the active support of their non-Episcopal neighbors. The bishop's report fell on ears of churchmen who were willing but unable to respond because Louisiana's parishes were not organized into a diocese and the Church on the national level had a weak and ineffective missionary program. It was not until the Church organized the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society in the General Convention of 1835 and accepted Louisiana as a diocese in 1838 that any move was to be taken to begin an organized effort at missionary expansion in Louisiana.

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[6] Thomas C. Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest," in The _Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church_, VII (December, 1938), 311.

In 1839, the year after he was appointed provisional bishop over the new diocese, Leonidas Polk made the first of his three visitations to Louisiana in his part-time care of his future diocese. There was at that time no great development, in terms of starting new parishes, even though Polk encouraged the Louisiana Episcopalians and noted areas for future attention. The reason for this delay in growth lies in the very structure of the Episcopal Church as an inheritor of Apostolic Christianity.

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[7] Edwin A. Davis, Louisiana, A Narrative History (Baton Rouge, 1961), 172.

The nature of the church is that it is "given" its life by God and is "sent" to preach, teach, and heal by Jesus Christ. It is not a spontaneous movement which springs up among a few faithful people, although the call for the church to come does originate in this way. In New Orleans, as in many other places, in Louisiana there were groups interested in the church, but it was not established until some one came with the grace of Apostolic Succession and with the authority of the "Divine Commission" given by Christ to go into all the world. Furthermore, the church had been organized from the first centuries of its life under a bishop in a diocesan family. Until this given structure was fully developed and a proper bishop was installed on a permanent basis, no startling developments would take place. In order for that portion of Christ's flock which directly proceeded from the apostolic bond to flourish there must first be a successor of the Apostles as its head.

In the years that Polk was provisional bishop the three organized parishes continued their activities, but no new ones were added. Conventions of these parishes were held on four occasions and they had as their primary business the task of organizing the diocese and providing for the episcopate. Meanwhile, the newly-organized missionary society was taking more of an interest in the frontier. The final visit of Bishop Brownell in 1837 was followed by one from the Church's first missionary bishop, the Right Reverend Jackson Kemper of the Northwestern diocese, in the early spring of 1838.[8]

Kemper was from Pleasant Valley, New York, and had been elected missionary bishop of the Northwest Territory by the General Convention of 1835.[9] He came down the Mississippi River on a fund-raising expedition to establish a medical college at St. Louis. When he arrived in New Orleans on February 10, 1838, Dr. Wheaton was serving as rector of Christ Church, and the bishop found him "more at home in the poorhouses than in the pulpit." He visited with devout members of the Episcopal Church like Richard Relf, cashier of the Bank of Louisiana, and Joseph Lovell of the grocery firm of John Lovell Company. Other members he visited were: C. Adams, Jr., a commission merchant, Lucius C. Duncan, merchant, Claude Watts, an attorney and an unsuccessful candidate for mayor, and Judge Prevost. He consecrated the second Christ Church located on land at Bourbon Street and instituted Dr. Wheaton as its rector on May 6, 1838. The finances of Christ Church, he felt, were badly managed, and the vestry was involved with the management of a cemetery given to the parish by the city.[10]

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[8] Diary of the Rt. Rev. Jackson Kemper, W.P.A. File 55, Louisiana State Library, Baton Rouge.

[9] Journal of a Convention of the Clergy and Churches in the State of Louisiana, Held in Christ Church, New Orleans, for the purpose of organizing said Churches into an Independent Diocese, 1838, 1.

At the time of Bishop Kemper's visit there appeared to be some tension between the older parish and the new St. Paul's in the upper part of the city. (The lack of priestly leadership in Christ Church and St. Paul's, as well as the absence of a bishop, had allowed the two parishes to be set against each other.) However, the successful effort to establish the diocese and Bishop Polk's later visit settled the dispute.[11] The result of Kemper's visit was to strengthen the churches in Louisiana, and his report to the Missionary Society encouraged that group to consider the area for missionaries.[12] His remark about visiting the section of Louisiana around Lake Providence was the first time an interest had been expressed in extending the church to the northeastern part of the state.

Christ Church continued to prosper under Dr. Wheaton's leadership and received Bishop Polk for the first time for services on May 5, 1839. Except for the cemetery involvement, the church had a sound financial status, selling all pews and attracting a large congregation for regular worship services. (In addition to local donations, certain members of the parish, like Joseph Lovell, gave generously to domestic and foreign missions.) In 1840 the parish contributed $300 to the Missionary Society, and gave $500 to erect a church at Matagorda, Texas, and a smaller amount for one at Key West, Florida.[13]

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[10] Vestry Minutes of Christ Church, New Orleans, May 6, 1838. Hereinafter cited as Vestry Minutes.

[11] Kemper Journal.

[12] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (April, 1838), 120.

St. Paul's Church had lagged after the resignation of John Wheat as rector in July, 1837, but services continued under the leadership of various laymen. In 1838 the Reverend Charles Goodrich, a former layman of the infant parish who, as a seminarian, assisted Wheat in the church's early stages, came as rector.[14] With the able assistance of faithful laymen like William Brand and Thomas Sloo, Jr., he was able to reestablish services in a school building on Clio Street and in 1839 build the first church on Camp and Gaienne streets.

Music in the new building came from an organ purchased from the French Church,which had closed and the Eucharist was celebrated with borrowed vessels.[15] It was not until

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[13] Ibid., May, 1839, 200.

[14] Charles Goodrich, New Orleans, to Herman C. Duncan. Manuscript in possession of author.

[15] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 84.

February 14, 1840, that St. Paul's was incorporated by the legislature with Dr. Goodrich heading the list of incorporators. Others included were: George W. Pritchard, John B. Grayson, Richard Swain, Robert Layton, Charles Henshaw, C. Adams, Thomas Meux, Thomas N. Morgan, John Messenger, Thomas Sloo, Jr., and William Brand.[16] Bishop Polk consecrated the new edifice for the parish of thirty-one communicants on March 29, 1840, at 10:30 A.M. Thereafter regular Sunday services were established in both the morning and evening to accommodate the people.[17] Financial support for the church's work was carried out in St. Paul's as in Christ Church by the public sale of pews after the communicants had had an opportunity to purchase their own.[18]

Grace Church, in St. Francisville, continued its work under the leadership of several clergymen and benefited by visits from Bishop Kemper as well as Bishop Polk. The Reverend Daniel S. Lewis became rector on July 10, 1839.

At the time of its acceptance as a diocese, little was known about the church's work in Louisiana in the national church councils. The deputies and bishops of the General Convention of 1838 indicated great faith in the future of the church in Louisiana since, on the basis of their own report, there was little to justify its diocesan status.[19] When the report on the "State of the Church" was prepared, the bishops could only note three parishes, one unnamed priest and 150 communicants. The Board of Missions was equally in the dark about conditions in Louisiana when it reported that "the State has never been explored, but eight or ten missionaries are, it is believed, needed in it at the present."[20] Actually there were two clergy in residence at the time of the Philadelphia meeting: N. S. Wheaton of Christ Church and Rev. Rodwell H. Ranney at Grace Church, while St. Paul's was vacant. Alexandria and Natchitoches were mentioned as a combined missionary station but no missionary was in residence.[21] From the founding of Christ Church there had never been more than four clergy in residence in Louisiana, and there was only one until 1830.[22] In 1840 the missionary society designated stations at Alexandria, Shreveport, Natchitoches, and Opelousas, but sent no priests to man them.

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[16] _Ibid_.

[17] _Daily Picayune_ (New Orleans), March 28, 1840.

[18] _Ibid_., November 11, 1840.

The church's work cannot be measured strictly by statistics but figures are some indication of the state of affairs. When, at the first convention of the diocese on Wednesday, January 16, 1839, canons were adopted and Bishop

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[19] General Convention Journal, 1838, 67.

[20] Ibid., 174. [21] Ibid.

[22] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (August, 1839), 277.

Polk was requested to give Episcopal oversight, only Christ Church and Grace Church presented reports. The New Orleans reports indicated 59 baptisms, 9 confirmations, 20 marriages, 18 funerals, and a total of 150 communicants. Only one death was reported for the year. Ranney reported for Grace Church: 77 baptisms (14 white children, 7 white adults, 31 colored children, 25 colored adults); 3 marriages; 14 funerals; 14 communicants added (12 white and 2 Negro); plus 15 communicants from other churches attending regularly.

The second convention of the diocese met one year later, January 15, 1840, again at Christ Church, and was memorable for two reasons: the convention received a communication from Bishop Polk accepting the convention's invitation to give provisional episcopal oversight; and Bishop Philander Chase, the first rector of Christ Church, was present as a guest.[23]

Since leaving Christ Church in 1811, Philander Chase had continued his ministry on the frontier and had become the bishop of Ohio and founder of Kenyon College in Gambier. The initial finances for this distinguished academic institution were provided by Lord Kenyon and Lord Gambier of England after Chase, on a fund-raising trip to the British Isles, had persuaded them of the need. In the fall of 1839 he was bishop of Illinois and set out on a similar venture to establish Jubilee College on twenty-five hundred acres of land in LaSalle County, Illinois.[24] These travels took him to Louisiana where he visited the friends he had left three decades earlier both at St. Francisville and in New Orleans. He reported on his visit:

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[23] Diocesan Journal, 1840, 3.

> The planters are hospitable; but few of them are religious. Even among those who were "sensible of their duties to support the Church of God" he found little in the way of contributions to his college. Mrs. William Bowman, widow of the former rector, contributed one hundred dollars and all the other five hundred for the college and fifty for the bishop.[25]

He hoped to do better in New Orleans, and an excellent opportunity presented itself as Dr. Wheaton, who wished to take leave to go to Cuba, asked the bishop to assume his duties for a season. Chase noted, "This is good news to me. It will afford me an opportunity to bring my cause fairly before the rich members of that Church and parish, and thus open the door to liberal donations."[26] He found to his disappointment that a priest from Kemper College was soliciting in New Orleans at the same time, but felt, nevertheless, that he had the upper hand. Both men were to be disappointed, and although the bishop was cordially received, he got no great contributions. He did, however, settle a matter that had been unresolved for nearly thirty years. When he left New Orleans in 1811 the vestry owed him fifteen hundred dollars in back pay, and he had sought to claim it over the years.[27] The vestry had refused the claim as recently as 1838, but Chase's presence pricked their consciences and a settlement was made.[28] He received neither the full amount nor the interest, but the matter was closed, and, with the settlement he sent one thousand dollars' worth of groceries to his wife via boat.[29] He remained in New Orleans to officiate at Christ Church, and was there at the time of the 1840 convention, and,at the request of Dr. Wheaton (who had not yet left for Cuba), he presided at the convention.[30]

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[24] Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences: An Autobiography (2 vols.; Boston, 1848), II, 445.

[25] *Ibid.*, 470.

[26] *Ibid.*, 471.

The convention's only significant business was to receive Bishop Polk's letter of acceptance--a matter of considerable importance to the Church in Louisiana--and to receive a new priest into the diocese. The president of the Standing Committee read a dismissory letter from the Bishop of Pennsylvania transferring the Reverend William B. Lacy, D.D., from that diocese to the Diocese of Louisiana.[31] (Dr. Lacy had come to Louisiana as president of the new college at Baton Rouge and was to be one of the founders of the parish is that city.)

Parochial reports were received for Christ Church,

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[27] Vestry Minutes, 1811-1838, passim.

[28] Chase, Reminiscences, II, 474.

[29] Ibid., 480.

[30] Diocesan Journal, 1840, 3.

[31] Ibid., 5.

Grace Church, and St. Paul's. Dr. Wheaton reported 47 baptisms, including 2 adults, 13 marriages, 46 burials, 70 pupils in Sunday School, and about 150 communicants. Dr. Goodrich reported for St. Paul's, 8 baptisms, 2 of whom were adults; 2 marriages; 2 funerals; and 31 communicants. He also reported the completion of the church, a flourishing Sunday School, and a ladies' sewing circle.[32]

In the year past the diocese had added in addition to Dr. Lacy, the Reverend Daniel S. Lewis as rector of Grace Church, and Father Ranney moved from St. Francisville to become a professor at the college at Baton Rouge.[33]

The Church in Louisiana had made some progress at least in terms of increased clergy and episcopal visitations. The National Church, through the missionary society, was beginning to take note of the needs in Louisiana, a first step in sending aid. Alexandria was made a mission station in 1839 and although they sent no missionary there, the society was aware of the lack:

> The diocese of Louisiana has also been placed under the charge of the Missionary Bishop of Arkansas, and has been recently visited by him. It is (sic) subject to sincere regret that, during the year, the Committee has not been able to accomplish anything in Louisiana. They have no missionary employed in the State. Its wants and its claim upon the Church, it is believed, are in no degree diminished; they are rendered more urgent by the delay in occupying the ground.[34]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 7.

[34] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (August, 1839), 247.

The Bishop made his second tour of Louisiana in 1840 and encouraged the churches, especially those in New Orleans. Following his visit and that of Bishop Chase, diocesan life was uneventful, and the third annual convention was called for January 20, 1841. A quorum was not present, due probably to weather and the difficulties of travel, and the meeting did not begin until five the next afternoon.[35] The delegates elected the following deputies to the next General Convention, scheduled for October: The Reverend N. S. Wheaton, The Reverend Charles Goodrich, The Reverend D. S. Lewis, The Reverend William B. Lacy, Lucius C. Duncan, James Colles, J. W. Anderson, and John Whitehood. The usual parochial reports were then read from the three parishes, and the convention adjourned until January, 1842, with the notice that Bishop Polk would again visit the diocese in March.

The Bishop arrived in the diocese as promised, this time visiting the southern section only. He had made two tours through the upper parts of the state and was well aware of the need to begin new works. He knew this could not be initiated without help from the missionary committee; hence, he confined his visit to that section where parishes could profit from a bishop's pastoral oversight.

Polk's presence in the established part of the diocese did have concrete results. The Standing Committee which acts as ecclesiastical authority in the absence of a bishop, called a special convention of the diocese (as authorized by the second article in its constitution) as follows: "1st Resolved, That a special Convention be held in this Diocese, for the purpose of requesting the General Convention to elect a bishop for the same."[36] Delegates gathered at Christ Church, New Orleans, at 5 P.M. on May 20. From Christ Church Dr. Wheaton, L. C. Duncan, Charles Harrod, Leonard Matthews, George E. Paune, and John Whitehead were present. St. Paul's was represented by Dr. Goodrich, Thomas Sloo, Jr., and Thomas Morgan. Grace Church sent their rector, Daniel S. Lewis, and laymen John Collins and R. E. Butler. The unorganized congregation in Baton Rouge was represented only by the priest who resided there, the Reverend Roderick Ranney.

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[35] Diocesan Journal, 1841, 3.

Wheaton, who presided, stated that the sole purpose of this meeting was to request the General Convention to elect a full-time bishop for the diocese, Bishop Polk having shared his time with a much larger area. Lucius Duncan, the faithful layman from Christ Church, addressed the delegates on the dire necessity for a full-time bishop. He probably also explained that the diocesan convention could not directly elect a Bishop because there were less than six priests in permanent residence. It was possible, however, for the convention to request that the General Convention elect one for them. He then presented the following preamble and resolution addressed to the forthcoming General Convention, which was duly seconded by the rector of Grace Church and unanimously adopted.

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[36] Diocesan Journal of a Special Convention, May 20, 1841, 7.

> Whereas, the Diocese of Louisiana, with its numerous and rapidly increasing population, presents an inviting field for the establishment of new parishes in connection with the Episcopal Church; and, Whereas, the slow progress it has hitherto made, in a great measure, attributed to the want of an Episcopal Overseer, who could give his undivided attention to the spiritual concerns of the Diocese; and Whereas, while the Convention bears grateful testimony to the piety, fidelity, and arduous labours of the Missionary Bishop of Arkansas, of which the Church in Louisiana has enjoyed the benefit since it was placed under his charge, and reposes unabated confidence in his zeal in its behalf, and readiness to do all in his power to promote its interest, consistent with his duty to the Church in other portions of the wide region which now owns his spiritual jurisdiction, it cannot be insensible to the fact, that the self-devotion of no one man can be adequate to meet the spiritual wants of a population so large, and so destitute of the ordinances of Christianity; therefore, Resolved, That the General Convention be, and hereby are, requested to elect a Bishop over the Diocese of Louisiana, agreeable to the provisions of Canon i, Section 1, of the General Convention be, and hereby are, instructed to present the aforesaid preamble and resolution to that body, at its session in the City of New York, on the first Wednesday in October 1841.[37]

The General Convention met in New York City, October 6-19, 1841, and Louisiana was represented by its provisional part-time bishop and lay delegates Lucius Duncan and John Whitehead.[38]

The memorial from the Louisiana convention was first presented in the House of Bishops on Wednesday morning, October 13, 1841. Louisiana's faithful friend Bishop Brownell moved, and Bishop Otey of Tennessee seconded, that the House nominate a bishop for Louisiana at two on the same day.[39] The matter did not come up as scheduled due to the press of other business, but on Saturday morning the sixteenth, Bishop Brownell again moved the election of Leonidas Polk as bishop for Louisiana and the vote was unanimous.[40] The clerical and lay deputies concurred in this choice, and Bishop Polk tendered in person both his resignation as Missionary Bishop of Arkansas and his acceptance as diocesan of Louisiana.[41] The missionary areas formerly supervised by Bishop Polk were then assigned to the Bishop of Tennessee.

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[37] *Ibid*., 25-26.

[38] *General Convention*, 1841, 7.

Leonidas Polk had accepted provisional charge of the Louisiana diocese in February of 1839 and made his first visit there in July of the same year. At that time there were only three organized parishes and two priests in residence, and a total of one hundred and fifty communicants. Alexandria-Natchitoches had been designated as a missionary station but no priest had yet been sent to man it; eight or ten other mission stations had been designated. Bishop Polk's part-time care of the diocese had begun to bear fruit by the time of his election to full-time bishop. The Alexandria-Natchitoches field had been filled in 1840 by the

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[39] Ibid., 96. [40] Ibid., 113. [41] Ibid., 116.

Reverend John Burke under the sponsorship of the Domestic Society.

Burke began his duties in the field explored twice by Bishop Polk on May 17, 1841, and could report a respectable parish of forty-three families, 34 Sunday scholars, and eight teachers.[42] The fact that only three of the adults were communicants indicated that the mission was to the "unchurched," and that episcopal visitation was necessary for administering confirmation. He reported that the services were well attended and that the singing was excellent. The community was one of "moral waste" and the gospel was never more needed. He was confident of his own provision although the people were in "pecuniary difficulties."[43]

Including the missionary Burke and Bishop Polk, the Louisiana clergy had grown from two to eight; one church was consecrated and one man ordained to the priesthood. The clergy baptized 280 infants and adults, and the bishop confirmed 70 people raising the communicants to 222. There were also 48 marriages in the diocese and 120 funerals since Polk had taken charge. Two thousand three hundred dollars was contributed by Louisiana churchmen for missionary and other benevolent purposes, and the Episcopal Church through two priests was heading educational institutions: Father

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[42] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (October, 1841), 297.

[43] Ibid.

Ranney, Baton Rouge, and Father Lacy at Jackson.[44]

The diocese was finally fully equipped by way of proper credentials and national church union; it was given full-time episcopal leadership in the person of Leonidas Polk to commence in earnest its work of extending the Kingdom through parishes and schools throughout Louisiana.

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[44] General Convention Journal, 1841, 50.

# CHAPTER VIII

## LEONIDAS POLK, SOLDIER TO BISHOP

Leonidas Polk was a product of the sturdy Scotch-Irish stock which had penetrated the Appalachian Plateau and Valley in the mid-eighteenth-century western migration.[1] When the seventeenth-century settlements in the eastern United States could no longer contain the new European arrivals to those shores, pioneers began to cross mountain barriers and settle in the great Mississippi Valley.

The Polk family had for some years owned a large grant of land in the Maryland Colony, but in 1753 young Thomas Polk, the grandfather of Leonidas Polk, set out for greener pastures, traveling through Virginia and settling in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. There he acquired a large tract of land; in 1755 he married Susan Spratt, and in their happy union raised nine children. He became a leader in local affairs, and widened his interest to the national level when he joined movements in which colonials began to articulate their resistance to the alleged iniquities perpetrated on the colonies by the mother country.

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[1] Joseph H. Parks, General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A. (Baton Rouge, 1962), 1ff.

In his own county these revolutionary expressions were crystallized in the semi-legendary "Mecklenburg Declaration" of 1775. That Polk was in sympathy with this movement is clearly established by his entrance into the Continental Army in which he rose to the rank of general.[2] His son William Polk also served in the Revolutionary Army throughout the war and emerged from the conflict as a colonel.

Thomas and William Polk returned to their North Carolina home and became successful planters after peace was established. William, like his father, was prominent in local and state affairs, serving for a time as legislator and a trustee of the University of North Carolina. His interest was, however, in the far-western section of the state which later became Tennessee, and to which he moved in the future. He married twice and fathered fourteen children: two by his first wife and twelve by the second. Leonidas Polk was born in Raleigh, on April 10, 1806, and his Christian name, like those for most of his brothers and sisters, was chosen from the classics. The selection of the particular name, Leonidas, was indicative not only of the Colonel's cultural interest, but also reflected his military background. This fourth child and fourth son born to Colonel Polk was to become Bishop of Louisiana and a General in the Provisional Army of the Confederacy.

Little information is available on the family's home life during the years of Leonidas Polk's childhood. The first letter which appears in his collected papers is dated March 10, 1822, when he was a student at Chapel Hill, and when like many sixteen-year-old boys he missed home but also wanted "more shirts and drawers."[3] Before his matriculation at the University of North Carolina in 1821, it is reasonable to assume that he had the traditional upbringing of a plantation youth. He undoubtedly had ample opportunity for outdoor activities such as riding and hunting, which training was later helpful in his work as a bishop when he traveled extensively in open country. He also excelled in athletics during his early education in a local Raleigh academy run by the Reverend Dr. McPheters. His later life reflected that he had acquired all of the cultural and educational equipment of a typical Southern gentleman. In his life on his father's plantation his attitudes were also molded and he seems to have had a particular concern for the slaves which remained a central factor in his thinking until he died.

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[2] Ibid., 5.

Life at the university during his one-year residence was apparently uneventful. Nineteenth-century universities were more on the order of present-day secondary boarding schools. The prescribed schedule of classes was rigid and left little room for extracurricular activities except for debating in which the future bishop excelled. His only other claim to fame rested in his ability to sing patriotic songs.

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[3] Leonidas Polk, Chapel Hill, to his mother, March 10, 1822. Leonidas Polk Papers in the Archives of the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee. Microfilm copy used by author.

With the name of the mythical hero Leonidas, with a general for a grandfather, and with a colonel for a father, it was natural that the young scholar should consider a military career, and there is some indication that his father's strong wishes also assisted his turn of mind to the military. The United States Military Academy had been established in 1802, and by 1823 it was accepted as a permanent American institution especially by the planter class in the South. This group thought of themselves as the American equivalent of the English aristocracy, and military service appealed to them as respectable careers for gentlemen. Leonidas' father secured the nomination from his congressman which allowed his son to take the rugged examination, and in June of 1823 he became a cadet at the summer encampment.[4]

Polk entered West Point in June, 1823, when the corps had a number of cadets who were later to gain distinction in their careers and in the pages of American history. Albert Sidney Johnston was one of Polk's closest friends at the academy and they remained intimate associates until Johnston fell on the battlefield at Shiloh. The future president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, and his leading general, Robert E. Lee, as well as Joseph E. Johnston, were among Polk's friends--as was Robert Anderson, the Union Commander at Fort Sumter. Another classmate was Francis Vinton who followed Polk's lead and entered the priesthood, and, like Polk, became a famous clergyman.[5]

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[4] Parks, General Polk, 21.

Polk was described by his contemporaries as a conscientious, daring, and consistent young man.[6] He demonstrated ability as a student by graduating eighth in his class, and as a leader of men by holding command ranks throughout his student years. He indicated also a passion for justice when he sought action from the Secretary of War on a technical violation of Academy regulations. The incident occurred in a mechanical drawing class when Polk was one of a few punished for violating a long-neglected examination regulation. The Secretary did not remit the penalty, but Polk survived the incident and he was restored to command.[7]

There is no evidence of any religious influence in Polk's home life or in his first two years at the Academy. His father, William Polk, was not a religious man, but he did not join with many of his contemporaries in scoffing openly at Christianity; his position was apparently neutral and he made no provision for a religious education or orientation for his children. It was traditional for the planter-aristocracy of the South to look to the Episcopal Church for religious guidance if, indeed, they looked anywhere. This, it seems, was the elder Polk's motivation though he had little place to look in North Carolina.

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[5] William W. Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1950), 290-91.

[6] William M. Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General (2 vols.; New York, 1915), I, 74.

[7] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 74.

The Episcopal Church had been a weak institution in North Carolina before the Revolution and nearly went out of existence during it. The diocese was not organized until 1817, and as late as 1821 there was no Episcopal Church in Polk's home town of Raleigh.[8] (The Episcopal Church was weak throughout America during the first quarter of the nineteenth century as an aftermath of the hardships it suffered in the Revolution.)[9]

If Polk found no religious training at home, it was not likely that he would find it at the Military Academy in 1823. During the Revolution and the years following, an eighteenth-century rationalism called Deism had succeeded in cutting the roots of the established religious groups in America. It was especially popular in the universities and among the intelligentsia. This religious philosophy found its center in France and formed part of the background of the French Revolution. Deism as a religious expression of French rationalism was exported to America before and during the American Revolution. It took deep root in the traditions of West Point, which was modeled after the Military Institute of France, in both its curriculum and military training.[10] The result was that formal religion was neglected and the prevailing philosophy was a skeptical humanism. Indifference is perhaps the best word to describe the religious atmosphere which existed at the Military Academy when Leonidas Polk was a cadet.

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[8] *Journals of the Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in North Carolina*, 1817-21, *passim*.

[9] Manross, *American Episcopal Church*, 172.

Deism did not, however, go unchallenged. A new pattern of Christian thought and practice had been sweeping the frontiers of pioneer American life, and by the 1830's was finding expression in older sections of the East, and in its institutions of learning. This approach was known as the "evangelical movement" and was spearheaded by followers of John Wesley.[11] The revivalistic methods of Wesley, and others like him, found fertile soil in the frontier society of America where itinerant preachers challenged the cold, rationalistic concept of religion held by the Deists.[12] Medical men and military officers were among the last to leave Deism, but the new Christian zeal found an entrance to the Academy in the person of Leonidas Polk.

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[10] William W. Manross, "Leonidas Polk: Early Life and Presbyterate," in Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, VII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 329.

[11] E. Clowes Chorley, Men and Movements in the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1950), 4.

[12] William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York, 1939), 246.

The chaplain at West Point was by tradition an Episcopal priest, and during Polk's tenure he was the Reverend Charles Pettit McIlvaine. Although only twenty-five years old, McIlvaine had been nominated for the chaplaincy by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. The chaplain was an exponent of evangelical Christianity and later became Bishop of Ohio, and one of the leaders of the Episcopal Church.[13]

Before he assumed his duties at the Military Academy, the religious conditions at that institution had been described to him in rather gloomy terms. Regulations required that officers and cadets attend chapel where Chaplain McIlvaine preached the Gospel with apostolic zeal, but, without any observable effects on his hearers. He had further contact with the cadets in a mathematics class that he taught, but for one year he saw no interest outside of formal services. The officers were friendly to him, however, none of them professed the slightest interest in religion. Cadets were allowed to visit only on Saturday afternoons but none chose to visit the chaplain lest someone think he was religious. In spite of the apparent lack of response to his efforts, the young priest continued to conduct the services of the church and to preach the faith. McIlvaine was known throughout his ministry as a compelling preacher and later events proved that even in this discouraging period his words were being heard more than he or his listeners suspected.

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[13] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 248.

After McIlvaine had been in residence nearly a year, one cadet finally came to his office. The young man had promised his father he would call on the chaplain, but only news of his father's death moved him to fulfill his promise. A polite conversation ensued, yet the cadet was impervious to religious suggestions. As a final gesture the chaplain gave the cadet two religious tracts presenting the reply of the traditional Christian faith to Deism. One of these tracts, The Letters of Olinthus Gregory, LL.D., on The Evidences, Doctrine, and Duties of Christianity, was placed, in the spirit of good fun, in the room of Leonidas Polk.[14]

That obscure cadet played the role of a Christian missionary without knowing it, for Leonidas Polk was ready to hear or read something about faith. Polk at that moment was brooding over the rejection by the Secretary of War of a reexamination of his recent disciplinary punishment. His refusal had made Polk pensive and he was ready to review his own philosophy and sense of values. The tract left in his room provided a vehicle for a self-examination.

McIlvaine's sermons to which Polk had indifferently listed to had prepared the ground for his turn of mind. One week later Polk appeared in the Chaplain's office,

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[14] Polk, Bishop and General, 91.

> . . . too deeply concerned to heed what would be said of him . . . his message he tried to utter but could not. Again he tried, and again; but the heart was too full for speech. At length it was: "tell me what I must do I have come about my soul. I know not what I want. I am entirely in the dark. What must I seek? Where must I go?"[15]

Forty days later Polk made a profession of the Christian faith and received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with another cadet, W. B. Magruder, in the presence of the entire corps in the Chapel of the Military Academy.[16]

Polk was not the only cadet who had been moved by the Chaplain's sermons, yet most of the others were reluctant to profess their beliefs. Even though all cadets were required to attend chapel, the regulations did not require reverend participation in the service. It is reported that Polk was the first cadet to kneel in the chapel, an act of devotion which ultimately spread to the entire corps. It was also Polk's example in his manly acceptance of Christ and his baptism that started a movement among the cadets resulting in a major portion of the cadets being baptized.[17]

Polk's conversion led not only to better days for the

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[15] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (March, 1839), 89.

[16] Duncan states that the baptism took place in the Hudson River by immersion. This is permissable but was not the general practice of Episcopal Church. Since McIlvaine was the chaplain at West Point and performed the sacrament, his witness that it was in the chapel must be accepted.

[17] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 92.

Christian nourishment of the men, but to happier days for himself in the Academy. He submitted to the discipline and was restored to the responsible position of orderly sergeant which included getting the men out of bed in the morning. Perhaps the authorities felt that a man with religious convictions would prove more likely to carry out this long-neglected responsibility than others had. He did in fact carry out his duties conscientiously, but his interest in a military career was declining and his attention centered more on the Church. Before his graduation in 1823, Polk announced his intention of resigning from the Academy in order to study for the priesthood. If he had been entirely free to choose, Polk would have left the Academy and accepted a teaching post at Amherst where he could have completed academic requirements for the seminary. His father was strongly opposed to this scheme, and out of deference to his father's wishes the youth completed his studies at the military institution.[18]

The usual furlough followed graduation, after which Polk submitted his resignation from the Army. While waiting for an answer he traveled around the North and received his answer before having to report for duty. Before he gained any actual military experience (other than academic), Polk terminated his military career for more than thirty years.[19]

Polk entered the seminary at Alexandria, Virginia, in the fall of 1828 and began his studies for the ministry.

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[18] _Ibid_., 104.

[19] _Ibid_.

This seminary had been in operation only since 1824 and was operated by the Evangelical party of the Church.[20] Chaplain McIlvaine was an intense evangelical, and it was natural that his protégé should go there. Polk's father continued to resist his son's plans to enter the ministry.[21]

His years in the seminary were rather uneventful and routine. His lack of classical studies did not hinder his theological work. He took his studies in good stride. These consisted of Greek, Hebrew, Bible, Ecclesiastical History, and Polity. He viewed the seminary life as a military man would, as one under discipline. He simply sat at the feet of his instructors and took what they had to say, except that he was unaffected by the narrow evangelical views of his teachers. The most eventful thing between his resignation from the army and his entrance to the seminary was his formal engagement to his boyhood sweetheart, Frances Devereux, in Raleigh.

The same year that he and Miss Devereux were married, Leonidas Polk entered the sacred ministry on April 19, 1830.

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[20] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 242.

[21] A story is told that during the inauguration of Andrew Jackson, Colonel Polk was in Washington and met an old army friend. The friend recalled that young Polk had graduated from the Military Academy and inquired where he was stationed. The colonel replied with a release of his suppressed hostility to his son's change in status, "Stationed? Why by thunder, Sir, he's over there in Alexandria at the seminary." Polk, Bishop and General, I, 107.

He was ordained deacon by the Right Reverend Richard Channing Moore, Bishop of Virginia, and became assistant to Bishop Moore at Monumental Church in Richmond. Bishop Moore, like all other bishops of that day, was the rector of a parish as well as bishop. (Since the office of Bishop had no financial support, bishops were required to support themselves otherwise.)

Polk remained only three years in Richmond and resigned because of overwork and poor health. In 1832 he took the cure of the wealthy and left for Europe with his wife to rest and regain his health. After visiting most of western Europe he returned in better health and spent the winter in Raleigh with his wife's family. His own family had moved on to a plantation near Columbia, Tennessee. In the spring he too settled there on family land, and was provided with slaves by his father to begin a plantation. The operation was successful, and he lived more the life of a southern planter than that of a priest. Here it was that he gained his insight into the needs of the black brethren of the South, and developed his philosophy in dealing with them.[22] His connection with the Negro, begun as a plantation owner, was continued with his work later as a bishop and one of the founders of the University of the South.

While in the area he did not forget his vocation as a priest of the Church. St. Peter's Church in that city was without a rector, and Polk accepted charge of the congregation without any remuneration. He did other missionary work in the diocese of Tennessee, and by 1835 was considered one of the leading priests of the state. In his parochial report for the same year he listed nineteen baptisms, sixteen of which were of Negro children. He felt impelled to comment on this fact as he often did in regard to the Negro. "This is a portion of our population, for the neglect of which the Rector feels that his conscience has rebuked him. They are as fair subjects for missionary exertion . . . as any of their brethren still in the heart of Africa."[23]

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[22] Manross, "Leonidas Polk," 307.

Polk was sufficiently active in the diocese of Tennessee to be elected to the General Convention of 1835, one of the most significant conventions in Episcopal Church history. He was well enough known there to be elected a trustee of the General Theological Seminary in New York. He must have watched with great interest while the convention deputies enacted canonical machinery to send bishops and missionaries to the developing West. Churches with a more "free" polity and organization were able to get to the frontier sooner than the Episcopal Church with its diocesan organization.[24]

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[23] Journal of the Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Tennessee, 1835, 24.

[24] The organizational structure of the Episcopal Church prevented it from reaching the frontier as early as groups like the Baptists. The latter required no formal education of its ministers and the minister was responsible only to his local church. The Episcopal priest studied for years

Before 1835 no specific provision was made for new territories, but at that time the Domestic Missionary Society was organized with authority to take the Church to the West. Jackson Kemper was elected for the Northwest and accepted, but Francis Lister Hawkes refused his election to the Southwest.[25]

The Tennessee clerical deputy returned to Columbia with a new vision of missionary work and enjoyed performing it in his own diocese. Polk suffered routine financial reverses in the crisis of 1837 which, with his poor health, restricted his movements from his home. For several years he ministered only to his family and Negro slaves on his plantation and those nearby.

The General Convention met again in Philadelphia in September of 1838 and took two actions which were to change Leonidas Polk's life: the formation of the diocese of Louisiana was approved and he was elected missionary bishop of Arkansas.[26] The journals of the convention give no detailed information on his election:

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and went out as a missionary representing the whole church and was responsible to his bishop and the missionary society. The Episcopal Church was too small in numbers and too weak in resources to transport a diocese to the frontier. The General Convention of 1835 sought to promote missions on the frontier by sending bishops who could call priests and create dioceses.

[25] General Convention Journal, 1835, 664.

[26] General Convention Journal, 1838, 81.

> The House of Bishops inform the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, that they hereby nominate the Reverend Leonidas Polk of Tennessee, as a Missionary Bishop of this Church, to exercise Episcopal functions in the State of Arkansas.[27]

There is no hint of who nominated him, although McIlvaine, who was now a bishop, was present and there is some likelihood that it was he. It is somewhat difficult to understand why the bishops would nominate and the deputies elect a man who was relatively unknown, who had been in ill health much of his eight years in the ministry, and, who had spent his few active years in an unknown part of Tennessee. Undoubtedly the electors were willing to accept the testimony of those who bore witness to Polk's gifts of leadership, intelligence, and personal holiness.

Polk's nomination to the episcopate was made by the House of Bishops but his actual election came from the clerical and lay deputies and was reported thus:

> The tellers reported that the Reverend Leonidas Polk had been duly elected to the office to which he had been nominated by the House of Bishops. Whereupon, the Canonical Testimonial in favor of the Bishop Elect was signed by a majority of the House, and sent to the House of Bishops.[28]

This was on September 15, 1838, and he was duly consecrated on December 9, 1838, in Christ Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. Chief consecrator was the bishop of Virginia, William Mead, who was also celebrant of the Eucharist. He was assisted by the following bishops: Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio who was epistoler and preacher; by Bishop B. B. Smith of Kentucky as gospeler; and by Polk's own diocesan, Bishop James H. Otey of Tennessee.[29]

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[27] Ibid., 114.

[28] Ibid., 80.

The service was described as "one of thrilling and overpowering interest" because episcopal oversight was being provided for new states and territories totaling a land area of 500,000 miles. Bishop McIlvaine in his sermon reviewed Polk's conversion at West Point, and the nature of the office to which Polk was called, after which he referred to this huge jurisdiction and Polk's preparation for it. According to McIlvaine, Polk had

> . . . settled himself for the rest of his life, as a preacher and pastor to an humble and obscure congregation of Negroes, whom he had collected together from neighboring plantations; to whom, living entirely upon his own pecuniary means, he appropriated a part of his own house for a church, and to whose eternal interest he had chosen cheerfully and happily to devote himself, as their spiritual father, with no emolument but their salvation. But such is just the true spirit for the highest of all vocation in the Church. To be servant of servants, is the very school in which to prepare for the chief ministry under Him, who took on the form of a servant. The Church needed a Missionary Bishop for a vast field, for great self-denial, for untiring patience, for a courageous enterprise. His eyes were directed to the self appointed pastor of that humble congregation.[30]

At the time of his consecration Polk was thirty-two years of age and was described by John Fulton, a family friend, as follows:

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[29] *Ibid.*, 391.

[30] Domestic Committee, *Spirit of Missions* (March, 1839), 89.

> In his personal appearance Polk had great advantages. Of good stature and an erect military carriage, broad shouldered and deep in the chest, with a well-poised, shapely head, strong but finely-cut features, one lock overhanging his wide forehead, clear complexion and keen but frank and kindly blue eyes, the first glance recognized him as a man to be obeyed; a closer scrutiny revealed him as a man whom noblemen might love, and meaner men might fear.[31]

Although Fulton lauded Polk's personal qualities and his eminent ability for the office of bishop, he was realistic about the man in other ways. "In scholarly attainments he was not so fortunate." Polk's education had been scientific, not classical or theological, and he was lacking in knowledge of Canon Law, a fact of great importance in 1861 when he had his diocese "independent" following the secession of Louisiana. Polk's preaching was clean and vigorous but at times diffuse, and his writing lacked the logic and grace of expression which characterizes a scholar. Fulton declared that Polk "was quite as conscious of his lack in these respects as he was unconscious of his eminence in others. . . ." He was a man of energy who conceived of great plans and aroused enthusiasm for them. He was a born leader of men, and exercised his gifts in his missionary episcopate during which time he accepted responsibility and made his first visitation to Louisiana.

As we have seen, the General Convention of 1838 accepted Louisiana as a diocese apparently on future prospects rather than past performances. Although Christ Church had been organized in 1805, thirty-three years later, in spite of a tremendous growth of people, the new diocese could boast only three parishes: two in New Orleans and one in St. Francisville. There were only two clergy in residence, the Reverend N. S. Wheaton of New Orleans, and the Reverend Roderick Ranney of St. Francisville, and a total of 150 communicants.

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[31] William S. Perry, The History of the American Episcopal Church (2 vols.; Boston, 1885), II, 563.

When the General Convention met again in 1841, the Episcopal Church in Louisiana had shown some growth but "not so rapid as might have been expected" (the triennial report stated that communicant strength had increased from 150 to 222 although the total number of clergy in the diocese had increased to seven).[32] The increase in clergy was especially important for the future growth of the Diocese of Louisiana, for the particular talents represented by these priests determined the nature of diocesan growth for the next twenty years. In fact, these men established the nucleii of parochial and diocesan organizations and institutions, which have come down to the present day.

The key to diocesan and parochial development was the presence in the diocese of Bishop Polk. Bishop Brownell had nursed the floundering churchmen to diocesan status through the critical years of 1830-38, and he had surveyed and made notes for future locations of various parishes for the Episcopal Church. However, it was Bishop Polk who nurtured this growth in his three extensive trips through the diocese from 1839 to 1841.[33] He carefully observed possibilities for the expansion of the Church and the particular porgrams to be developed to meet those needs. On his first and second visits he recommended the initiation of work at Shreveport, Natchitoches, Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Opelousas, Jackson, and Clinton. He emphasized that the primary need was for missionaries to go into the field and organize parishes. He noted again and again the need to minister to the Negro slave as well as to the white man even as he himself had done in Tennessee. The lack of priests and missionaries at this stage of his episcopate in Louisiana led Polk later to emphasize the recruiting of men (for the priesthood and his proposed missionary program) for the diocese.

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[32] General Convention Journal, 1841, 71.

It was during the period of his missionary episcopate in Louisiana that Bishop Polk formulated plans and organized programs which laid the groundwork of diocesan life for the next twenty years and beyond. His attention was directed in the early years (and his efforts would be expanded in later years) toward establishing parishes, founding schools, reaching the Negro, and developing a diocesan organization and life. (This was so centered around his life that it is difficult to separate diocesan life and the life and work of Leonidas Polk during his years in Louisiana.

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[33] Domestic Committee, Spirit of Missions (1839-1841), passim.

# CHAPTER IX

## POLK AS MISSIONARY BISHOP OF ARKANSAS

The title given to Polk, that of "Missionary Bishop of Arkansas," was misleading because Polk's territory was not limited to Arkansas nor was he, strictly speaking, just a missionary bishop. He was given jurisdiction over three organized dioceses, Mississippi (1820), Alabama (1830), and Louisiana (1838), which made him a diocesan bishop three times. Texas was recognized as a republic in 1837, and was a "foreign" country which made Polk a foreign bishop when he went there. Adding Arkansas to this, Polk was charged with responsibility for covering an area of over 500,000 square miles with a population of 1,500,000. This population was scattered and the parishes he was to visit were few: in 1838 the entire area had only seventeen parishes and sixteen clergy, none of which were west of the Mississippi River. After the first of his three tours of the area he appealed to churchmen in the East to share their abundance with those on the frontier. His challenge was to a life of service and self-denial, the only reward for which would be a "crown of righteousness" because "our recompense lies beyond."

It was during his initial missionary tour that Polk first visited Louisiana where he would in three years begin to devote his full energies:

> . . . in pursuance of an invitation, extended to me by the diocese of Louisiana, to take the Episcopal charge of the diocese . . ., I proceeded down the (Red) river from a point about one thousand miles from its mouth, to visit such places as were accessible from the routes.[1]

On Friday, March 22, 1839, he arrived at Shreveport where he was met by a churchman who took him to a small settlement of former Tennessee Episcopalians about fifteen miles from the town.[2] Polk had known some of these people, and was pleased by their desire to build a church and call for a priest.

Upon his return to Shreveport, which he described as a town of "about 1000 inhabitants, and . . . without any religious services whatever" where he preached to a "respectable and attentive congregation." Encouraged by the response in a place where no church existed, and with the promise of a lot and promise of subscriptions to build a church, he recommended it as a missionary station.

> The state of things is at present somewhat rude, but not more so than might be expected from an active border population, filled with the spirit of enterprise, and without the immediate and constant impression of Gospel influence.[3]

Polk predicted that Shreveport by virtue of its excellent geographical location would become important in North Louisiana, and a vital station for Church influence.

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[1] Leonidas Polk, Columbia, Tennessee, to Domestic Secretary, July 12, 1839, in _Spirit of Missions_ (September, 1839), 308.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., 309.

Leaving Shreveport, the bishop continued down the Red River by steamboat two hundred and fifty miles stopping en route at Natchitoches on Wednesday in Holy Week. In the courthouse he conducted Maundy Thursday rites and preached on Good Friday to a congregation largely composed of gentlemen who were liturgically trained and who made the proper responses in the service. He held the traditional baptismal sacrament on Saturday for six infants and one adult, and addressed the congregation "on obligations, and the nature of the ordinance" with profit to the hearers. Two services were conducted on Easter Day for large congregations in the courthouse including some who had come from rural areas. The bishop was inspired by the response of his listeners and spent several days visiting the families who had worshipped with him. He found great interest among the people for a church in the oldest settlement in Louisiana which then numbered 2,500 people. One-third were Creole French and presumably Roman Catholic; the other two-thirds were non-Roman and entirely without a minister.

> They have no one to baptize their children, to bury the dead, or break the bread of life to the perishing living. They are truly to be pitied. . . . I commend this plan earnestly to the attention of the Committee, and hope through the blessing of God on your efforts, these perishing men may speedily have the bread of life sent unto them.[4]

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[4] *Ibid.*, 310.

Taking leave of Natchitoches, after a two-day journey down the Red River, he arrived at Alexandria where he found only a few churchmen but suggested that a priest be sent there too.

> I have no doubt also, that if the proper efforts were made, great good could be effected among the blacks of that parish, the number of which, in proportion to the whites . . . is ten to two, there being about 10,000 blacks, and not more than 2,000 whites.[5]

Although he did not have time to visit Opelousas, he suggested, on the recommendation of a "gentlemen of intelligence," that it be added to the future mission stations in Louisiana.

Stopping at Natchez, he gave greetings to the convention of the Diocese of Mississippi of which he was provisional bishop, and then continued his journey to St. Francisville arriving on the second of May. He was in the company of two Mississippi clergy and was a guest at the mansion of Judge Butler. Grace Church had recently been vacated by Rector R. H. Ranney, and Bishop Polk had there, on May 3, his first administration of Confirmation to a class of three persons. He was interested by the prospect of growth and expressed the hope that an energetic priest could soon be found for Grace Church.[6]

The Louisiana tour was completed with a week's visit to the city of New Orleans. He celebrated the liturgy and preached at Christ Church, assisted by the Rector, Dr. N. S. Wheaton, and at St. Paul's confirmed a class of seven presented by the new rector, Dr. Charles Goodrich. Bishop Polk's assessment of the opportunities for the Episcopal Church in New Orleans indicated great opportunities for expansion. He observed that the American population was making rapid strides upon the French, which provided many more minds open to the Christian faith as held and taught by the Episcopal Church. It was not for New Orleans alone that the church must be strong, but for the inhabitants of the entire Mississippi Valley "whose destiny for good or evil is more or less influenced by the moral effects of their periodical visits."[7]

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[5] Ibid., 311.

[6] Ibid., 312.

The seats of Christ Church were wholly taken and those of St. Paul's nearly filled. Furthermore, the clergy were constantly discovering Episcopalians among the newcomers who "absent themselves from the services of the sanctuary for want of church accommodations." This moved Polk to make another plea for missionaries and for provision for their support. Visits to Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama concluded his five-month tour of over 5,000 miles in which he preached forty-four times, baptized fourteen, confirmed forty-one, laid one cornerstone and consecrated one church. In this journey he had found a large field of labor for himself and those who could be persuaded to assist.[8]

Bishop Polk made his second visit to Louisiana in the spring of 1840 coming to New Orleans by sea from Alabama.[9] Only two days after his arrival the bishop reported happily that he consecrated St. Paul's Church in the Upper Fauxbourg to "the service of Almighty God." The cornerstone had just been laid on his last visit and he was pleased to see the progress made. The bishop was assisted by the Reverend Charles Goodrich, rector of St. Paul's, and by Dr. Wheaton of Christ Church, and "after the sermon I administered the rite of Confirmation to one person, and the Holy Communion to a large number of devout recipients."[10] These combined services took two to three hours--not an unusual length for a service in 1840. The bishop then commented as follows on the location of the church in New Orleans:

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 313.

> The atmosphere surrounding the spot where they have sought to plant and rear the Church, though genial in some respects, is infected, nevertheless, with certain elements in some degree peculiar. They need the sympathies and prayers of their brethren everywhere, that God would strengthen their faith, brighten their hopes, and enlarge their charity, so that their new household shall become another focus from which the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, may shine upon the inhabitants of that already large and increasing city; destined as it is inevitably, to accumulate a larger population than any other on the continent.[11]

Polk had a vision of New Orleans growing to be the most populous city in the United States, but he saw, even in the environs of the new church, "certain elements" out of accord with Christian practice. Here then was a great opportunity for the Church to take root in what the bishop conceived would be the country's largest city.

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[9] Leonidas Polk, Columbia, Tennessee, to Domestic Secretary, July 21, 1840, in Spirit of Missions (September, 1840), 284.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 285.

Later on the same trip, Bishop Polk went to the older parish on Canal Street, Christ Church, and confirmed eighteen persons, one of whom was a Negro. He remained in New Orleans for several days visiting the clergy and laity, and then began a trip to the area between Bayous Lafourche and Plaquemine which he called the "river coasts." He went to this locale upon the urgings of planters who indicated the readiness of the people to build a church and support a clergyman. There the bishop found another fertile area for the missionary outreach of the church--to the slaves as well as to the planters and their families. The area also "commends itself to the regards of these who feel interested in the colored race, as among other things they look particularly to the spiritual improvement of that portion of their families." His enthusiasm led him to call for two or more missionaries for that portion of Louisiana, and also caused him to delay a Sunday appointment at Baton Rouge, by missing the boat.

He did call at Baton Rouge, on April 6, 1840, and reported that to his knowledge no priest of the Church had ever ministered in Baton Rouge until recently. At the time of his visit there were two clergy in residence, both at Baton Rouge College. The Reverend William R. Lacy, D.D. of Pennsylvania was president and the Reverend Roderick H. Ranney, formerly of St. Francisville, was then professor of languages and mathematics. Services were being conducted alternately by these two priests in a rented room at the garrison, and they had prepared several candidates for confirmation, had the bishop been there as anticipated.[12]

April 8, 1840, marks the first ordination to the priesthood in the Diocese of Louisiana. The Reverend Daniel Lewis was serving at Grace Church, West Feliciana, as a deacon. Bishop Polk ordained Lewis to the priestly office with assistance from the two New Orleans clergy. He remained there "for the rest of the week, visiting and teaching publicly, and from house to house."[13] Confirmation was administered to ten persons and the bishop was impressed by the "concern for the salvation of souls." Likewise he noted the care given by the parishioners to the church building making it fit for the public worship of Almighty God, including a fine-toned organ. While in St. Francisville he noted the possibilities of establishing parishes at Clinton and Jackson. This visit to Louisiana was concluded with an observation that there were then five priests in Louisiana and an immediate need for six more--at Natchitoches, the river coasts, Jackson, Clinton, and Opelousas. He addressed a question to the Society--"Whence are they to come?"

Polk made his final visit to Louisiana as provisional bishop in February, 1841. He had left his home at Columbia, Tennessee, on November 30, 1840, for an extensive tour of Arkansas and the Indian territory.[14] He found good prospects for new mission stations among the Indians as well as among the little band of dispersed Episcopalians. His concern was always directed toward all men, whites, Indians, and Negroes, wherever he went.

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[12] *Ibid*., 284.

[13] *Ibid*., 285.

He descended the Red River, entering Louisiana for the second time via Shreveport, and arriving there on February 13, 1841. The next day being Sunday, he conducted Divine service and preached to a congregation which had gathered for that purpose after learning that the bishop was in town. He noted in his journal that this was the first sermon preached by any clergyman since his visit two years earlier. While in the area he administered the sacrament of Holy Baptism to a man, his wife and five children.[15]

On this journey he met a priest from the Diocese of Tennessee, the Reverend William Steel, who had moved there, probably at the request of Tennessee church people in the area.[16] Polk felt there were three stations where strong missions could be established but that an efficient missionary was needed. Father Steel was laboring as his strength allowed, but the bishop felt that he was too feeble for such arduous work. However, this man labored in Caddo Parish until taken by death in 1858.[17]

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[14] "Report of Leonidas Polk to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church," in _Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America in a General Convention_, Held in the City of New York, From October 6th to October 19th, Inclusive, A.D., 1841 (New York, 1841), 169. Hereinafter cited as _General Convention Journal_.

[15] _General Convention Journal_, 1841, 171.

Three more months were spent in Louisiana revisiting areas in which he had previously ministered. In Natchitoches he found that there was still no clergyman of any non-Roman communion, but that he had the prospect for a missionary. He journeyed again to the river coasts and found that no work had yet begun. In New Orleans he reported only that he had held confirmation at Christ Church and St. Paul's for seventeen people.

Louisiana was no longer left to do its missionary work on its own because some help was forthcoming from the national organization of Episcopal Churches known as the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. It was slow in coming but the Church finally got sufficiently organized and motivated to organize a national missionary operation at the General Convention of 1835 meeting at Philadelphia.[18] On May 17, 1841, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society sent the Reverend John Burke to Natchitoches at Polk's request, and the new priest began work which developed a new parish.

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[16] General Convention Journal, 1841, 172.

[17] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 104.

[18] General Convention Journal, 1835, 615.

A missionary sent and supported by the national church was a new and long overdue development for the Church in Louisiana as well as elsewhere. From the Apostles' time missionaries have been sent to preach the Gospel to those outside the Church and to minister the sacraments. Never in the long centuries of the Christian tradition had the leaders of the Church waited to be asked to come. Yet the Episcopal Church in Louisiana began with a call of local people in a new territory who, by the leave of the Bishop of New York, were granted the services of a priest. This policy continued for thirty-five more years, with occasional concern by individual bishops, until the Church could get organized and begin sending personnel to the growing territories and new states of the West. With the advent of Father Burke a new day came for the Church in Louisiana because it signaled more help from the stronger and older diocese of the East via the national missionary society.

The hardships of travel in such a large territory had called for a vigorous man, which Polk proved to be in spite of his earlier sickness. During his three years in this position Polk had made three visitations, covering the entire area each time, for which he made reports to the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. He summarized his official acts

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to the House of Bishops: 71 baptisms, 199 confirmations, 4 ordinations, and 5 churches consecrated after which he commented:

> The vast extent of the field, the dispersed condition of the population, and the absence of communication with the different parts of it, have made the labor very great, and the apparent results far less than I could have desired. I have felt that I was engaged in the work of a pioneer, and the seeds I was sowing, cast in as I trust in faith, would, under the watering of my successors, and the blessing of God, spring in due time and bring forth fruits unto eternal life.[19]

His travel throughout the South also had the effect of further calling his attention to the problem of the slaves. According to his son and biographer, Polk was a believer in "gradual emancipation" and "so moving through his domaine he ever kept his eye on this momentous question."[20] Polk's assessment of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana and its future role lay in his belief that New Orleans was the key to the Mississippi Valley. This was the great port city of 1839 through which all water traffic must flow from the Mississippi and Ohio valleys. It would have been a natural center to develop a strong church influence for those in and visiting New Orleans and to send missionaries out to new locations. These impressions, noted as early as his first visit, were probably a decisive factor in his decision to devote all of his time to Louisiana.

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[19] General Convention Journal, 1841, 71.

[20] William M. Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General (2 vols.; New York, 1915), I, 73.

# CHAPTER X

# BISHOP OF LOUISIANA

When Leonidas Polk stood before the fourth convention of the diocese as its bishop, he was no stranger to the clergy and laity of Louisiana. The site of this meeting of January 19, 1842, was St. Paul's Church in New Orleans, which Polk had consecrated two years earlier. There were six clergy present: John Burke of Natchitoches, Charles Goodrich, the host rector, William Lacy, president of the college at Jackson, Daniel Lewis of Grace Church, Roderick H. Ranney, professor at Baton Rouge, and N. W. Wheaton of Christ Church. Of these only Burke was new and he had been sent to his post upon Polk's recommendation. The laymen present were also known by the bishop from his previous visits. They were Harrod, Matthews, Lowndes, and Lucius Duncan from Christ Church, John Andrews and F. H. Southmayed representing St. Paul's, and Thomas Butler of St. Francisville. The bishop began his diocesan episcopate with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist,as he was to do at every other convention.[1]

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[1] Journal of the Fourth Convention of the Diocese of Louisiana, Held in St. Paul's Church, in the City of New Orleans, on the 20th day of January, 1841 (New Orleans, 1842), 29. Hereinafter cited as Diocesan Journal.

Lucius Duncan reported to this assembly that the deputies to the General Convention had complied with the mandate of the 1841 resolution requesting the election of a bishop. He then read an extract from the Journal of the House of Bishops giving official notice of the election of Leonidas Polk as Bishop of Louisiana.[2] The Bishop was then formally presented to the group and made his first address: "Beloved Brethren, I appear before you for the first time, in obedience to an invitation you have felt moved, under God, to extend to me, to assume the office of chief pastor among you."[3] His first official message to the diocese began on a theological note. Apostolic faith and order, evangelical zeal, and unity in the truth were the themes which the bishop chose to mold the small new diocese into a proper unit of the Holy Catholic Church.[4] As "father in God" of the infant diocese, he recalled the essential purposes for which those present were united, and then he spelled out a program to carry out their mission in Louisiana. These were the themes emphasized. This was the approach used for diocesan development in Louisiana for the next twenty years. Polk expanded these ideas into specific areas of concern in future addresses, but the basic program was laid out in his first address.[5]

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[2] Diocesan Journal, 30.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Holy Catholic Church" is the title used for the Christian community in the Apostles Creed. Catholic is an adjective which refers to the universal mission of the Church. It refers specifically to those branches of the Church which come in the unbroken historic lines of the Apostolic Succession through the bishops. Hence the word "Catholic" is properly used by the historic Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Communions, and, in a larger sense by all Christians. It is used in this work in the historic sense.

His presence there, he reminded the gathering, was by invitation, but in that branch of the church of which they were members, the democratic process of choice had been exercised. He had come to lead the diocese to be one body as "co-workers of God, for the promotion of His glory, and the salvation of men"; for this they must be united. He reminded the clargy that they had been commissioned to preach the Word and administer the holy sacrament as a binding obligation. Regarding the faith, he reminded them:

> That branch of the Catholic Church to which we belong, has given us in her creeds, articles, homilies, and services, a brief, but comprehensive exposition of her views of the doctrines, she has commissioned us to teach.[6]

Armed with this faith, remaining steadfast to the "most certain warrant of Holy Scripture" and administering to the faithful "the comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ" the priests would reach the lost, strengthen the faithful, and save their own souls. Finally, he reemphasized that the number of priests then present was not sufficient to carry the Church's work into all of Louisiana, nor would great numbers of clergy come to the frontier to do the job.

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[5] Diocesan Journal, 1841, 30.

[6] Diocesan Journal, 1842, 31.

The only alternative was to recruit native sons for the priesthood.[7]

Prior to Polk's acceptance of his election as Bishop of Louisiana as his sole responsibility, there were only three parishes in the diocese.[8] However his work as provisional bishop of the diocese had begun to bear fruit in the organization of new parishes with priests in residence.[9] John Burke reported that since he established Trinity Church at Natchitoches he had conducted regular Sunday services, completed other parish organizations and administered the sacraments. In this new congregation he planted the seeds of mission from the very beginning by moving them to contribute to the "Spirit of Missions" (a common name for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society). He began also to extend the church's worship by distributing Prayer Books in Alexandria, Shreveport, Donaldsonville, and by placing copies on the Red River steamboats which made stops at Natchitoches.[10] This work continued for the next several years under Burke's energetic and able leadership, and Natchitoches was admitted as a parish in union with the diocesan convention in 1843 under the name of Trinity Church.[11] In this same year a church was constructed at a cost of $2,400, one-third of these funds being raised locally and the remainder within the diocese.

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[7] Diocesan Journal, 1842, 32.

[8] Ibid., 30. [9] Ibid., 4. [10] Ibid., 34.

[11] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 3.

The Episcopal Church had an earlier history in Baton Rouge. It began in 1819 when a group of interested church people wrote to friends in Boston for assistance in obtaining the services of a priest.[12] The shortage of clergymen prevented a priest from coming, but William Jennison, a schoolteacher and lay reader, came to teach and to lead the local Episcopalians in founding a church. Jennison succeeded in bringing about an organization and on March 16, 1820, "The Episcopal Congregation of Baton Rouge" was incorporated for a period of ten years by the legislature of the State of Louisiana. In addition to lay readers, the other members were: John Reid, Cornelius R. French, Wright Converse, George Steer, William Wickoff, Adam Winthrop, P. Pailhes, Charles Bushnell, Lloyd Gilbert "and other such free white persons of twenty-one years, as shall contribute ten dollars per annum, for defraying the expenses of the corporation."[13] Philander Chase's care and concern for having every detail of charter of Christ Church in accordance with the canons and polity of the Church Catholic is reflected in this charter. The charter declared that as a body politic the parish was to

> . . . enjoy all the rights, privileges, and immunities, guaranteed to the Churchwardens and vestrymen of Christ Church, in the county of Orleans by the first section

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[12] St. James Church, Baton Rouge, The Messenger, V, No. 10 (March, April, June, 1910), 1.

[13] *Ibid.*

> of an act incorporating the said wardens and vestrymen which was passed on the third of July, eighteen hundred and five.[14]

The charter further provided for a vestry, its terms of election and its powers. It specified that the organization existed for religious, charitable and educational purposes and that the charter was for ten years only. Jennison had passed a similar act of incorporation for an academy which he operated when he was seeking to establish the parish church. He left after about three years, the academy collapsed, and the Episcopalians dispersed to worship in other places.[15] It was at this stage that Bishop Brownell reported on his tour of 1830 that "the principal people of Baton Rouge are Episcopalians, and are now supporting a Presbyterian clergyman, for want of one of our own communion."[16]

The parish was not revived until 1839 when two clergymen, Dr. William R. Lacey and Reverend Roderick Ranney, came to lead an educational institution. Their work inspired members of the church to call an organizational meeting on February 25, 1843, at the residence of F. D. Newcomb. In addition to Ranney and the host, those present were: Adam Winthrop, Daniel D. Avery, I. Houston, P. Mortimer Enders, Morris Morgan, Cornelius R. French, William Markham,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Thomas C. Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest," in The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, VIII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 314.

William M. Fulton, Henry Newcomb, Alfred Gates, James W. Wikoff, and Joseph Fowler. A petition was drawn up for a charter naming Messrs. Newcomb and Markham as wardens, and French, Gates, Avery, Fulton, and A. A. Williams as vestymen. The legislature of the state granted a charter to this group.

With the arrival of two Episcopal clergymen (Lacey and Ranney) at a new college in Baton Rouge, interest picked up among the churchpeople and the two priests shared the celebration of the liturgy on Sundays. The place of worship alternated at times between the Presbyterian Church, the garrison, and the courthouse.[17] Mrs. Zachary Taylor, wife of President Taylor, was one of the prime movers in the second effort to begin a church in Baton Rouge. She was a devout Episcopalian and used the offices of her husband to obtain use of a room at the garrison and equip it as a chapel.[18] Ranney represented this unorganized parish at the diocesan convention on March 25, 1844, under the name of St. James' Church, Baton Rouge.[19]

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[17] Parochial Report of St. James Church, Baton Rouge in Diocesan Journal, 1844, 20.

[18] St. James Parish 1844-1944 (Baton Rouge, 1944). A printed book compiled from the records of St. James Church celebrating the centennial of the charter of the parish. Mrs. Taylor's efforts in the founding of St. James are not found in the present records, but the compilers assure the author that such records did exist in 1944.

[19] Vestry Minutes of St. James Church, Baton Rouge, March, 1844.

The only other parish established prior to 1843 was the Church of the Ascension in Donaldsonville. The possibility of a parish there had been mentioned by Bishop Brownell as early as 1830, and it had been visited by John Burke when he left some Prayer Books. Bishop Polk took the initiative himself in this work when he visited Donaldsonville on April 3, 1842, and held services.[20] He mentioned that this was the second occasion of public worship, the first being the visit of John Burke. The bishop was pleased by the "familiarity manifested by a highly respectable congregation with our formularies" and that a church would easily be established there. He returned on May 12, and met with the citizens of Donaldsonville to organize the Church of the Ascension. He took immediate steps for the procurement of a priest because he looked "upon this parish as one of great importance, not only in itself, but in the country connected with it, both by the Mississippi and LaFourche."[21]

Natchitoches had also become a mission station in mid-1841 and the Reverend John Burke was in residence. He reported at the time of the 1842 convention that his work was fruitful in the first month.[22] Regular Sunday worship was well attended as was the Sunday School and a particular emphasis had been placed on sacred music. Burke reported the full cooperation of the ladies, as well as the men, and felt the force of Christianity would overcome the paganism of the community. He was using Bibles, Prayer Books, and tracts as a means of inculcating religious practices and making the church known. He was distributing copies to the people in the community as well as placing them on passing steamboats.

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[20] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 5.

[21] Ibid.

[22] John Burke, Natchitoches, Louisiana, January 10, 1842, to Domestic Secretary in Spirit of Missions (March, 1842), 63.

Burke, writing from the January 21, 1842, convention, informed the domestic society that excellent opportunities for the church existed at Shreveport, Donaldsonville, and Alexandria. These needs he felt would be filled through the offices of Bishop Polk whom, he observed, arrived at the meeting "in the midst of our services, having encountered extreme difficulty and fatigue in the prosecution of his journey."[23]

Polk had come to the Louisiana convention but had left his family in Tennessee. His exhaustion from the journey and prolonged exposure to the January weather caused him to develop an inflammation of the lungs which confined him to bed for six weeks. He was not able to resume his official duties until the middle of March, when he "preached to a devout congregation of colored persons."[24]

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[23] _Ibid_., 68.

[24] _Diocesan Journal_, 1843, 4.

Soon thereafter he began to travel about the diocese giving encouragement to the established parishes and seeking out possible areas for new work. He made such a visit on April 3, to Donaldsonville, where missionary Burke had visited earlier. Following his trip there he made a notation in his journal which was typical of others he had made before and was to make in the future.

> I could not but remark on the familiarity manifested by a highly respectable congregation with our formularies, indicating very plainly, that it was a point at which in no distant day, we might see a congregation organized, and a Church edifice erected.[25]

Polk remained in the Bayou Lafourche area throughout the spring. He gathered a congregation at Thibodaux in the courthouse and, returning to Donaldsonville, organized the Church of the Ascension on May 12, 1843. The bishop felt a sense of accomplishment from his Lafourche tour and developed such a liking for the sugar cane country that he later moved his family to the area and became a planter-bishop.

It should be noted here that Polk received no remuneration from the diocese for his work; hence it devolved upon him to provide his own living as he had done on his Tennessee plantation. When he visited his family in the last half of 1843, he made his decision to bring them to Louisiana and continue this method of providing for them.[26] During this visit he continued to perform the liturgy and preach to congregations made up primarily of Negroes, mostly at St. John's Church, Columbia, Tennessee. Polk returned to Louisiana with his family in late December, arriving in time to conduct Christmas services on Bayou Lafourche for the Negroes and to form a parish at Thibodaux, which he named St. John's after his beloved parish at Columbia.

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[25] _Diocesan Journal_, 1843, 4.

[26] _Ibid_., 5.

Grace Church in St. Francisville acted as host parish for the 1843 diocesan convention. The same clergymen were present and the bishop noted that there were no changes in the ranks of the clergy. There were, however, five visiting priests from Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and Massachusetts. The bishop had invited them to the convention probably with the idea of attracting them to the diocese. In order to make them feel at home, they were given honorary seats as delegates.[27]

The bishop's address to the convention was as practical as his first address was theological. In the former he had given the diocese a proper point of view and a reason for its being; now he laid out specific courses of action he wished to see the diocese follow. They were: a special effort to recruit a native Louisiana priesthood, a "provision for the religious instruction of the colored race," and a highly developed missionary strategy and organization.

Concerning the need to encourage men to enter the ministry, the bishop reported that three individuals had been accepted as candidates for holy order of whom but one, William F. Brand, of New Orleans, unfortunately had been transferred to New York. He urged the clergy to seek out and pray for young men who would "count it a high privilege, and their chief joy to serve Him in the sanctuary." He then turned to the Negroes who were constantly in his mind:

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[27] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 7.

> There is a subject, my brethren, which most intimately concerns us as Christians and Christian ministers, in our peculiar field of labor; I mean, provision for the religious instruction of the colored race. These people strongly commend themselves to our charities in this respect, for many reasons. It is one of the chiefest charms of the Gospel of Christ, that it seeks to equalize the human condition; and to compensate, by the richness of its spiritual provisions for the disparities existing in the worldly circumstances of our race . . . their claim to our attention here, is greatly strengthened by their peculiar condition of dependence.[28]

The bishop had lived close to the slaves on his Tennessee plantation and had provided for their spiritual nurture through the liturgy and catechism. In his travels as missionary bishop he had noted the presence of Negroes and expressed a sensitivity to their spiritual needs.[29] Louisiana, at the beginning of Polk's episcopate, had become identified with the "South" and was expanding its plantation slave economy. Polk was, in fact, to help in this expansion when he established a sugar plantation on Bayou Lafourche.

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[28] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

[29] "Report of Bishop Polk," in the General Convention Journal, 1841, 157-172, passim.

He accepted this as one of the conditions of Southern life and found little agreement with anti-slavery sentiments. He expressed a paternalistic concern for the slaves and his travels and frequent contacts with the Negroes convinced him that the new diocese should direct its missionary efforts to them. The very condition of slavery "pre-disposes the mind to a teachable disposition of religious instruction, and a readiness to receive and obey the truth."[30] The Negroes, he felt, were "a promising field, from which we may reasonably expect to reap the fruits of our labor."

Polk made a special plea to the laity without whose active cooperation any attempt to minister to the Negroes would be futile. He made it clear at this point that he was not seeking changes in the status quo nor did he intend "to dogmatize on the civil relations or rights of individuals, but rather to bind the consciences and the affections to the faithful discharge of the duties of those relations." Plainly, the bishop appealed to the laity on the grounds that slaves would be better workers if they were Christians. However, there was a hint that the future status of slavery could change by "the inculcation of right principles" between servant and master "by the intelligent conscience of the parties." This concern was to grow as Polk administered his diocese and as slavery became more of a decisive national issue. In 1843 it was not the most crucial issue and the bishop directed his diocese to the pressing need of missionary organization and advance, of which the Negro was a prime object.[31]

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[30] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

Organized missionary effort on the part of the Episcopal Church had only begun in 1835 and when Polk had served six states as missionary bishop, he had found serious inadequacies in both the national and diocesan efforts to evangelize the unchurched. By 1843 he was a diocesan bishop with a largely missionary field whose finances and clergy were under the Domestic Missionary Society. He used the diocese's fifth convention as an occasion to spell out in detail his conception of a workable missionary program and organization.

Polk proposed logically that the bishop in each diocese appoint, direct, and control all missionaries in his diocese; that he be assisted by a single missionary committee; and that the variety of conflicting and confusing groups be resolved into that single body. The bishop, in conference with this group, would make recommendations to the national Domestic Society and approve their appointments of men prior to their reception in the various dioceses. Regarding funds received by the national group from the church at large, Polk proposed an equal distribution to the diocese (like Louisiana), domestic missionary districts, and foreign work. At his discretion a diocesan bishop might choose to disburse a portion of his funds to missionary bishops. In either case the bishop would remain the chief shepherd of his flock, and not be undermined by missionary appointments of priests by distant functionaries. Polk's proposal attracted the immediate attention of the Domestic Society and was adopted as the basis of its future operations.[32]

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[31] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

The missionary emphasis outlined by the bishop found the first implementation at the convention where he proposed it. A missionary committee was formed in the Louisiana diocese and charged with the responsibility to receive and disburse funds for the support of missionaries in concurrence with the bishop. The convention further proposed that a special offering be taken in each parish during the Epiphany season as one source of these funds.[33]

The missionary spirit was not limited to formal resolutions and the discussions of the convention. These in part had been inspired by a special missionary rally held in Grace Church prior to the formal meeting. The clergy, laity, and "a highly respectable congregation gathered from the parish and neighbourhood" were led by the bishop in a meeting designed to encourage missionary knowledge, support, and enthusiasm. Appropriate resolutions were adopted in this gathering exhorting the individual churchman to accept his duty of missionary support as a privilege.[34] (Such meetings formed a part of many diocesan conventions as well as of the General Conventions. It is also noteworthy that the first effective diocesan machinery was a missionary committee.) As the church's primary business is mission, it was appropriate that this was the first extension of the diocese's organization in convention. The 1843 convention recognized also the need to provide for infirmed or superannuated clergy, and orphans and widows of clergymen, but no specific steps were taken.[35]

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[32] Board of Missions, Spirit of Missions (June, 1843), 180.

[33] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 14.

Bishop Polk's labors were not confined to Louisiana but continued in Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. In journeys through his own diocese and the neighboring territories his mind turned to another field for missionary expansion, the Indians:

> The suggestion of an Indian missionary episcopate is a good one, and the Church ought to take a hand in establishing it without delay. A missionary among the Cherokees told me, some years since, that the forms of the Church were admirably adapted to the heathen mind.[36]

Perhaps reflecting upon the difficulties of his own duties and projecting the need of a bishop among the Indians, Polk noted "the man must be a Xavier or a Swartz who takes charge of it."[37]

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[34] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 16.

[35] Ibid., 15.

[36] Board of Missions, Spirit of Missions (August, 1843), 309.

Parochial reports reflected a healthy state in the regular parishes and distinct progress in the mission field at Natchitoches. Since the last convention Lacey had moved from Baton Rouge to accept the presidency of the College of Louisiana at Jackson. There was no organized work there but Lacey undertook services in both Jackson and Clinton which initiated the beginnings of two new parishes.[38]

Eighteen months passed before the bishop and convention could meet again. His episcopal supervision during this time was directed primarily to three areas of the diocese: the Felicianas, Lafourche, and Central Louisiana. He found it necessary to return once again to his family and business in Tennessee and remained there from July through November. His official acts for the entire period were numerous: 200 baptisms, 210 confirmations, 102 sermons, 7 consecrations of churches, one ordination, and 17 celebrations of the Eucharist.[39] This last figure is somewhat shocking for present-day churchmen but reflects the practice of celebrating the Holy Communion only once per month. The bishop had been successful also in establishing four new parishes in the diocese. St. John's in Thibodaux had been organized in February of 1843, and by the following January, Polk reported happily that a fine Georgian Church had been constructed as a "commodious temple to the honor of God" and that it was consecrated to God free of debt.[40] He took particular interest in this new parish and its constructions since it was in every way a result of his personal labors. Parishes were founded also in East and West Baton Rouge and in Alexandria, and two clergymen were placed in parishes permanently, plus four others on a temporary basis. Opelousas and St. Martinsville were prime areas for the development of new work and the latter was marked for a priest who could speak the French language.[41]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 13.

[39] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 7.

The next gathering in 1844 was significant for the emerging diocesan structure. In order to carry out its basic mission the Church in Louisiana, like the Apostolic Church in every land and in every age, found it necessary to develop certain diocesan machinery. But organization and finance were not the sole concern of the 1844 meeting. The previous convention had shown a concern over the lack of education in Louisiana. Public education was non-existent in the state, except in New Orleans, and any progress in this field was due to private or ecclesiastical initiative. Many schools in the East had begun and were continued under the tutelage of the Church, and several Louisiana priests were engaged full time in schools and only part time in parish work. Realizing the need for schools, the convention expressed its feeling and passed the following resolution:

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[40] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 7.

[41] Ibid., 12.

> That the institution of seminaries of learning, under the superintendance of the Convention, is highly expedient, and recommend that a Committee of Education, consisting of five members, of whom the Bishop shall be Chairman, be appointed to consider, mature and report a plan for the establishment and protection of such seminaries to the Convention.[42]

This was a significant step and a necessary one for the diocese to take. If there were to be education the church or some other private group would have to support it, and if it were to be effective it must have direction. The committee's work was an endeavor to which the bishop would give an increasing amount of time and effort.

The bishop and delegates found it necessary to stabilize the convention itself. What had begun as a small meeting had grown so large with the increasing number of parishes and clergy that rules of conduct were needed. Therefore, in response to a resolution of the previous year, a set of Rules of Order was adopted without dissent.[43] With orderly procedure established, the delegates proceeded to a second important step relating to the convention and the bishop. Just as the larger gathering had necessitated rules for conducting the convention, similarly, it was necessary to devise means of paying the bills. In the past Christ Church had not only hosted the group, but its vestry had paid the bill for publishing the journals. It was clear that this was unfair to one parish, and to put an end to this inequity the idea emerged that the expenses should be a corporate responsibility of the diocese in which all parishes should share. Furthermore, the bishop received no support from the diocese and lived on his own funds. Recognizing these as undue hardships on the bishop and Christ Church, the delegates passed a resolution setting up a Convention Fund to be supported by an assessment on each parish. The stated purpose of this fund was "to defray the necessary expenses of the Convention, and the expenses connected with the Episcopate."[44] This procedure has been followed ever since.

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[42] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 23.

[43] Ibid., 17.

In his address before the convention the bishop took note of the growth of the diocese in terms of new parishes, additional priests, and increased administration of the sacraments. He reemphasized to the clergy "the importance of seeking out suitable young persons from among ourselves, who could be trained up for the Church [priesthood]." He felt also it was necessary to make some comments on the subject of "agitation in the church and in the world, upon the subject of the faith and order of the gospel."[45]

The "agitations" referred to by the Bishop were to bring on fratricidal strife in the United States and as a consequence to split temporarily the Episcopal Church. The American thorn was the problem of slavery which was receiving increasing attention as a public issue and became the decisive factor leading to the Civil War. Polk chose not to elaborate upon this subject in the 1844 convention, but it did plague him as a bishop and as a slaveholder, and it was the issue of slavery which eventually induced him to end his episcopate in Louisiana and join the Confederate Army. Perhaps it was not necessary for Polk to explain his views on slavery at that time. He was personally committed, as were most of his fellow churchmen in Louisiana, to accept the institution as a socio-economic necessity and as a lawful institution under Louisiana and American laws. This did not mean that he looked on it as a permanent feature of Southern life, or that he was unconcerned for the spiritual and material welfare of the Negroes. He did in fact spend a considerable portion of his time and resources on their behalf. He chose at that time, as he had clearly indicated one year previously, to direct the efforts of Louisiana Episcopalians to raising the educational and spiritual level of the Negroes within the system of slavery. The events of the next sixteen years crystalized his ideas on this subject and made a decision on behalf of the Negroes which would end his life.

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[44] _Diocesan Journal_, 1844, 23.

[45] _Ibid_., 14.

Bishop Polk was more precise and outspoken regarding the disruptive issues before the councils of the Episcopal

Church. In his first address he had made clear his theological position as an "Evangelical Catholic," and reminded the convention that the clergy of the diocese were in accord with him: they accepted the basic Catholic doctrine of the Church that "our Blessed Lord organized, ordained, and commissioned a Church, to which he entrusted the work of the conversion of sinners, and the confirmation of the faithful."[46]

Polk emphasized also strict adherence "to the truth and appointments of the Gospel, as set forth in our liturgy, articles, and homilies." The traditional Anglican position of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for salvation and the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ was again reaffirmed by the bishop.

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[46] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 15.

## CHAPTER XI

## PAROCHIAL DEVELOPMENT

### (Missionary Expansion Within the Diocese After 1843)

The convention delegates in 1843 listened with interest to Bishop Polk's plea for missionary organization within the diocese and acted upon his suggestion immediately. In the missionary rally that followed the convention those present adopted a resolution which established a Missionary Committee to encourage the propagation of the Gospel in the diocese, establish new parishes, and administer funds for those purposes. They passed a resolution calling for a special missionary offering which would be taken in all parishes on the first Sunday after Epiphany, the season of the Christian Year during which mission is emphasized.[1]

Although this committee was set up with the purpose of extending the Episcopal Church into every village and hamlet in the State of Louisiana, the only place where missionary activity actually became organized was in the City of New Orleans. In early 1845 a number of interested clergy and laity formed the City Missionary Society for the purpose of raising funds, and encouraging the establishment of more parishes of the church. Bishop Polk reported that their Society was to make special effort "for the supply of the spiritual destitution immediately around them; and which from the energy with which it has given itself to its work, bids fair to be eminently useful in the spread of the Gospel."[2] The bishop commended the group for their assistance, for the total support they were giving to one mission, partial support to another, and for assistance to the newly-formed Church of the Annunciation Parish in its construction of a church.

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[1] _Journal of the Fifth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Louisiana_, Held in Grace Church, St. Francisville, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the 18th, 19th and 20th January, A.D. 1843, 14. Hereinafter cited as _Diocesan Journal_.

The primary contribution of the City Missionary Society was given to the Church of the Annunciation, which had held its first public service on Advent Sunday, 1844. The Reverend W. O. Preston was the missionary. He reported that a Sunday School was established simultaneously with the services of public worship with two teachers, Thomas Sloo, Jr., and W. S. Brown and two pupils, James M. Brown and Charles Yancey. From this small school with intense individual attention the enrollment grew to 153 within the first month's operation. The actual attendance, however, numbered only 75 due to lack of sufficient organization and difficulty in securing "a competent number of efficient teachers."

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[2] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 14.

Public services were well attended in a room on the corner of Race and Pacanier (Chippewa) streets.[3]

One means of extending the Gospel as well as helping churchmen to grow in knowledge of the faith was the distribution of Christian literature. To provide for this and to have books for the school, a library of 110 volumes was bought for the parish as one of its first programs. The rector encouraged giving of one's own means for spreading the faith elsewhere and in the first four months of struggle for their own survival, his mission succeeded in sending $95.50 to domestic and foreign missions, keeping only $36.95 for local expenses.

Actual organization of the Church of the Annunciation began on March 25, 1844, when a group of gentlemen had a charter of incorporation enacted by the legislature. A meeting was held in the office of Thomas Sloo, Jr., on July 31, with the following elected vestrymen: Benjamin Lowndes, Joseph Callendar, William S. Brown, E. W. Briggs, Chauncey M. Black, and John P. McMillan. Sloo was elected senior warden, Lowndes, junior warden, and Callendar, treasurer and secretary. This group then proceeded with further organization and extended a call to Preston to be their rector. With his acceptance the vestry launched immediate plans to erect a church. This parish was admitted to union with the diocese on April 3, 1845.[4] Bishop Polk gave his thanks to the City Missionary Society for the aid given Annunciation and expressed hope that it would help the diocese carry out its mission in New Orleans:

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[3] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 20.

> . . . a congregation has been organized, and the beautiful building which now adorns Annunciation Square, has been erected; a large portion of the pews have been taken. . . . Let us entertain the hope and make it the subject of our prayers, that this may be the beginning of a series of like efforts which may terminate only with the furnishing an adequate supply of church accommodation to the perishing multitudes of the metropolis of our Diocese.[5]

Having helped Annunciation in its organization, the City Missionary Society in 1846 turned its attention to other work. It supported the Reverend Charles Fay, who began service at a missionary station January 18, 1846, on the corner of Carondelet and Perdido streets. This was the second Sunday after Epiphany, the season of mission, and the new station was called simply "City Mission, New Orleans."[6] Fay reported a total of 24 communicants, representing eighteen families connected with the mission, and a respectable and increasing congregation in attendance at services. A Sunday School was instituted and given a library of 112 volumes. Measures were taken to secure ground for the erection of a church, and to organize as a parish, with prospects that a large congregation would be ready to occupy the Church when it was completed. However, the rector resigned and was replaced by the Reverend William R. Nicholson who organized the parish as Grace Church. There were 90 communicants and 122 in the Sunday School when it became a unit of the diocese in 1848.[7]

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[4] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 7.

[5] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 11. [6] Ibid., 29.

The City Missionary Society was responsible for the realization of several other projects and the Seaman's Church and the revived French Church were direct results of its activities. The society also laid some of the groundwork for Trinity, Mount Olivet, St. Luke's, and Emmanuel churches in New Orleans.[8]

Thus the high hopes of those at the missionary gathering in 1843 had been partially attained in the city of New Orleans, but little had been done beyond the bishop's efforts outside the city. He again reminded the diocese of its obligation to do more in the state and indeed in the world.

> I have again to call attention of the diocese to the importance of increasing the amounts of our contributions for diocesan missions. I am well aware that our city parishes are doing a good work, in the efficient measure they have adopted for extending the privileges of the gospel in New Orleans, but in attending to those who are nearest them, they must not forget that "the field is the world," and that great as the spiritual destitution immediately around them is, it cannot be greater than in many parts of the country districts of the diocese. . . . It is upon the

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[7] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 29.

[8] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 27.

> brethren of the laity we rely, and to them I would now address our earnest appeal. . . . I would respectfully but earnestly press the duty of adopting some measures for drawing out the resources of our diocese, and of addressing ourselves vigorously to the task of the work of extending the gospel within our own borders.[9]

In response to the bishop's appeal, the Missionary Committee of the Louisiana diocese began extending its work to various points in the state outside New Orleans on a small scale. The organization and some funds remained intact long enough to assist the parishes of the diocese in rebuilding in 1866 after the war.[10]

Bishop Polk's second address to the diocesan convention of 1843 contained the seeds of most of the programs he was to develop during his entire episcopate: education, a ministry to the Negro, the formation of a missionary organization, strategy and program adequate to extend the Church throughout Louisiana and beyond.[11]

It was only eight years since the Episcopal Church on a national level had embarked on an organized program of missionary expansion. Both the national organization and its particular programs had met with a mixed reaction among church leaders and there was considerable sentiment for revision.[12] A number of alternate plans had been suggested from various quarters and Bishop Polk presented ideas of his own which seemed to commend themselves to others. The point of greatest debate centered around the jurisdictional confusion between the diocesan organizations and the Domestic Board as two separate organizations working for the same end, often in the same place.

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[9] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 19.

[10] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 260.

[11] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 7-11.

[12] Ibid., 9.

As a possible solution, the bishop suggested that the Domestic Committee supply all aid to a diocese through the local committee and that all missionary appointments be made through the bishop.[13] He was correct in his view that a priest could not function under canon law in a diocese without the permission of the bishop. For a missionary to be appointed by a Domestic Board and be responsible to that board (and not to the bishop) could sow the seeds of disunity and destroy the very purpose for which the missionary was sent. Hence, Polk said, "The missionaries ought to be appointed directly by the Bishop of the respective Dioceses, to whom they should be directly responsible."[14]

The bishop of each diocese would then be free to conduct the missionary affairs of his diocese as he was ordained to do. The missionary committee in the diocese would be charged with collecting and appropriating funds for the support of missionaries as the Domestic Board was accustomed to doing. Bishop Polk asked that the Diocesan Committee be appointed by the convention of the diocese and that funds be collected and dispersed by this committee, thus making it possible to dispense with the Domestic Board and to be rid of its alleged incompetency in the distant West, as well as what is thought to be "its anomalous and odious exercise of Episcopal powers."[15]

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[13] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 9.

[14] Ibid.

The bishop here placed his finger on two serious problems--one theological, the other practical. Mission under the Episcopal system is especially committed to a bishop as his primary function, and to carry out the church's mission he has been given sole jurisdiction in his own diocese. Hence Bishop Polk rightly objected to the usurpation of episcopal prerogative by any committee outside the diocese assigning priests. The practical problem was the church's failure to extend its work into the West where population was increasing. The Domestic Committee was set up for this purpose in 1835, but it proved unequal to the task and Bishop Polk suggested turning its functions over to the local group. (In this latter principle Bishop Polk was consistent as a "states rights" man, rather than a nationalist, in church affairs as well as in political issues. In fact, when the State of Louisiana seceded from the Union in January of 1861, Bishop Polk followed suit and seceded the diocese of Louisiana as an independent unit of the Church.)[16]

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[15] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 10.

One of Polk's chief accusations against the Domestic Board was that it robbed the bishop of his right and responsibility as the chief missionary in his diocese, domestic and foreign, at the same time denying him control over funds because they were not disbursed through the Episcopal order. To correct this, at least in Louisiana, he directed the convention to appoint a Diocesan Missionary Committee through which funds might be collected and distributed under his direction.[17]

On January 10, 1843, the convention approved the bishop's plan for diocesan mission in a series of resolutions. These set up the machinery for propagation of the faith, called for an annual offering for missions, and invited a special rally for that evening. At the rally, convention members and townspeople from St. Francisville and the area adopted a final resolution appealing for all members to consider it their duty and privilege to extend the blessings of God in mission as their primary aim "till the ministrations of the Church shall be known in every town and hamlet in the Diocese, and called for liberal contributions to be made to sustain those who are laboring in the casue of foreign lands."[18]

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[16] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 46-47.

[17] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 10.

[18] Ibid., 16.

Following that high aim during the next several years, the Episcopal Church spread widely and rapidly into every area of the state. Under the energetic and enthusiastic leadership of mission-minded Bishop Polk, five new parishes and missions were added from 1841-1844, and the number of clergy rose from six to eleven.[19]

While the church was seeking to extend itself in Louisiana, neither the convention nor individual members were unmindful that the mission of Christ was to the whole world. This was reflected in the resolution at the missionary rally and also in the records of the *Spirit of Missions*. In 1836, the Board of Missions of the national church began publication of the *Spirit of Mission*. In almost every issue from June 1836 on, there are specific donations for domestic and foreign missions by communicants and parishes of the diocese.[20]

The existence of a missionary society was helpful in the parochial beginnings in New Orleans but less so outside the city. The bishop himself was the chief agent of missionary expansion in the other parts of the state, and rightly so, because the bishop has always been the chief missionary from the Apostles' time. On his first visit to Louisiana in 1839, Polk had noted possible spots for future parishes, and he made a practice of leading worship where he could, in homes and even in the streets. His usual method was to seek out churchmen, or those amenable to the church's teaching and liturgy, and gather them for worship. He sought to lead worship and provide the sacraments for the slaves whether with the whites or separately. When a group seemed strong enough to warrant parish organization, he would encourage them to take three steps: obtain a charter from the state, secure land and build a church, and find the services of a priest through his offices.

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[19] *Journal of the proceedings of the Bishop, Clergy, and Laity, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*, Assembled in a General Convention, Held in St. John's Chapel, in the City of New York, From October 6th, to October 20th, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord, 1847, 207. Hereinafter cited as *General Convention Journal*.

[20] Board of Missions, *Spirit of Missions* (New York, 1836-1850), *passim*.

This pattern was consistently and extensively followed and resulted in the formation of more than three dozen parishes in the next dozen years, at the rate of three or four each year. From Bishop Polk's diary one finds that the Louisiana diocese experienced its most rapid growth in the three-year period from 1843 to 1846. No less than fourteen parishes were organized and eight other missionary stations not large enough for parish status but worthy of attention were set up. Clergy working in the diocese in parishes and schools increased from eleven to twenty-one, or double the number reported in 1843.[21] To increase the native priesthood had been a hope expressed by the bishop in his first address as full-time Bishop of Louisiana, and this too was showing signs of becoming a reality with a total of eight persons entering candidacy for the ministry or taking holy orders.[22] Special missions like those established in New Orleans in the French language also had beginnings in this period in five stations in the state. Of these, the mission for seamen was of unique importance also because it was estimated that two-thirds of the seamen who sailed in or out of ports in the United States in the early 1840's came at one time or another to New Orleans.[23]

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[21] General Convention Journal, 1844, 207; General Convention Journal, 1847, 189.

A new area for missionary effort, long established in Louisiana churches, was given a special emphasis by the bishop in 1845. "The attention of the Diocese has been turned toward the duty of establishing Parochial Schools, as important means of advancing the interest of sound learning and pure religion."[24] This educational development had two stages: one in which Bishop Polk sought to develop parish schools within the diocese, and the second when he led an interdiocesan effort to form a university. The diocesan program will be examined in detail, as will the unique effort of the bishop to minister to the slaves. First it will be necessary for us to follow the bishop in his extensive journeys in which he sought out churchmen and other interested parties to form worshiping congregations into parishes.

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[22] General Convention Journal, 1847, 79, 189.

[23] General Convention Journal, 1847, 189.

[24] Ibid.

Immediately following the missionary rally at St. Francisville in January, 1843, the bishop visited three towns where he saw possibility of starting a parish or where a movement had already begun: Jackson, Clinton, and Baton Rouge. The Reverend William B. Lacey, D.D. had been in residence at Jackson for a year as president of the College of Louisiana and had conducted Sunday services for the residents, assisted by Father Lewis from St. Francisville. Their joint efforts ultimately resulted in the establishment of St. Alban's parish.[25] Lacey also conducted worship 15 miles away in the town of Clinton while he ran the school at Jackson. Like the mission at Jackson, the initial worship at Clinton was shared between Lacey, Lewis, and Ranney of Baton Rouge.[26] It was not, however, until 1852, when the Reverend Frederick Dean came to live in Clinton, that regular services were instituted and St. Andrew's Church was organized as a parish.

In February, the bishop continuing his visitations, organized the parish of St. John's in what became his home territory at Thibodaux.[27] Perhaps because St. John's got such personal attention from the diocesan leader, this new congregation was able to buy its cornerstone within ten months. The bishop's own record of this ceremony is worth recording:

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[25] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 45.

[26] Diocesan Journal, 1848-56, passim.

[27] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 7.

> I laid, with the usual solemnities, the corner stone of a remarkably neat church in the village of Thibodaux, for the use of the congregation of St. John's parish. It is built of brick and covered with slate, and is nearly ready for consecration. The promptitude with which the friends of the enterprise have acted is worthy of the highest praise. They will, within a period of a few months of its inception, have carried out their plan of erecting an exceedingly neat and commodious temple to the honor of God; have furnished it with the usual accompanyments (sic), and presented it to His church for consecration, free of debt.[28]

This was an accomplishment of which the bishop was duly proud and which he desired to see emulated many times over in the diocese. A more recent visitor to this edifice agreed with the bishop's pleasure at its appearance, adding that it "was the most perfect example of Georgian architecture I have seen in America."[29]

Later in January, 1844, Bishop Polk made his first call on the newly-organized parish of St. John's in West Baton Rouge. In the diocesan records this parish is listed variously as being located at Devall, Smithfield, Grossman's Landing, and finally West Baton Rouge. The explanation apparently is that Smithfield was the plantation where the priest lived, Grossman's Landing the nearest steamboat landing,

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[28] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 9.

[29] Dom Gregory Dix, an Anglican Benedictine from Nashdom Abbey, England, in remarks to the author, March, 1955.

Devall's, the post office for the area, and West Baton Rouge, the civil parish.[30] The local group had secured the services of the Reverend A. H. Lamon of Indiana, which the bishop approved, and the new priest reported a congregation of eighty white people with two colored groups numbering 100 each. Lamon brought this parish to union with the diocese and labored there until he died of yellow fever contracted while ministering to the sick and dying in the epidemic of 1853.[31]

In May, Bishop Polk made a visit to the central part of the diocese, ministering at the parish in Natchitoches, and preaching and giving the sacraments in several places in the area of Alexandria. On May 8, 1844, he organized St. James' Church, Alexandria, "embracing many of the families of the parish [county] of Rapides, which bids fair to be an inviting field of labor." As early as 1830, Bishop Brownell had mentioned Alexandria as a good site to start work.[32] Eight years later, the Domestic Committee's publication "Spirit of Missions," reported that a mission station existed in Louisiana consisting of Alexandria and Natchitoches.[33]

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[30] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 119.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Thomas C. Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest," in Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, VII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 314.

[33] General Convention Journal, 1838, 174.

It is mentioned again in the next year as vacant, with the added comment that "the Committee have (sic) not been able to accomplish anything in Louisiana."[34] Bishop Polk found on his first visit there on April 4, 1839, that "the friends of the Church were few, but desirous of the services of a minister."[35] Before his next visit, John Burke had distributed Prayer Books there and probably had conducted worship. In any event, the people were moved to begin a parish in May, and the convention received them in June, 1844.[36]

In addition to these parishes, the work at St. James, Baton Rouge, was among that mentioned by the bishop for special commendation. St. John's, Lafourche Interior; St. James', Alexandria; St. John's, West Baton Rouge; and St. James', East Baton Rouge, all began on a sound footing by building churches at once.[37] In addition to his duties in the Diocese of Louisiana, Bishop Polk made visits to parishes and stations in the Republic of Texas and the states of Mississippi and Alabama.[38]

The next year was less productive in the diocese due to prolonged absences of the bishop, who was occupied in work outside the diocese.[39] When a priest is consecrated to the episcopacy he is made a "bishop in the Church of God" which knows neither local nor national boundaries nor racial limits. Since Christianity is a universal religion intended to reach into all the world, the church's bishops and other ministers have responsibilities beyond their local cares. This is especially true of bishops, who sit regularly in a national House of Bishops with ongoing responsibilities in the United States and in foreign missions. Bishop Polk, like all other American bishops, attended meetings and performed services outside of his diocese. The House of Bishops elected him, made him missionary bishop, then bishop of Louisiana, and it was to this House of Bishops that he answered in the hierarchial structure of Church government. It was largely due to services rendered to the House of Bishops and its activities that he was out of his diocese more than he was in it during 1844.

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[34] _Spirit of Missions_, August, 1839, 247.

[35] _Ibid._, September, 1839, 306.

[36] _Diocesan Journal_, 1844, 6.

[37] _Diocesan Journal_, 1843, 10.

[38] _Diocesan Journal_, 1844, 7-16.

[39] _Ibid._, 9.

During the summer months and early fall, Bishop Polk remained at his plantation at Columbia, Tennessee. He still supported himself by his own means, hence he had to spend some time looking after plantation affairs in order to devote the major part of his time and energies to his diocese.

In mid-September he departed from Columbia and journeyed to Philadelphia, to attend the General Convention. At this convention Bishop Polk was elected a trustee of the General Theological Seminary in New York City and visited there upon the adjournment of the convention.[40] The reason for this hasty visit was that the Episcopal Church was in the midst of a grave theological crisis in the 1840's, and certain professors and students at the General Theological Seminary were accused of holding teachings contrary to the Catholic Faith.[41] Polk made reference to these difficulties in the diocesan convention of 1844, in which he gave his own strong theological views. Polk's reason for this positive statement of his theological position was to counter new ideas that were entering the diocese possibly from the National Church and certainly through the church press. Like most other clergy in the period 1820-1850, he accepted the reformation doctrines of *sola scriptura* and justification by faith. To him this was not a violation of Catholic tradition, but a safeguard for its protection.

There was, however, another point of view in theology which was developing. It began in England in the 1830's and came to be known as the "Oxford Movement," and its leaders were called "Tractarians" because they issued small theological tracts. In these tracts, especially in "Tract 90" written by John Henry Newman, a priest of the Church of England, the ongoing traditions of the historic Church were recognized only as a guide to scripture and the role of good works found a place in Christian salvation. The effect of these tracts was to cause profound disturbances among the reformation-minded Evangelicals who charged the tractarians with "Romanism." The reformation had stripped the Church of England of much of its legitimate heritage. It had followed Luther and Calvin too far on the Protestant path. The Oxford Movement sought to restore the older emphasis on sacramental grace, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Baptismal regeneration, and revived traditional ceremonies. This movement had been transported to America and assumed great proportions in 1843 when a candidate for orders, Arthur Carey, professed acceptance of its principles. A graduate of the General Seminary in New York where these ideas were being taught, Carey finally received permission to be ordained but died before this took place. Formal charges were made against the professors of the seminary and the movement was an all-important issue in the General Convention of 1844 and in many others until the twentieth century.[42]

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[40] *General Convention Journal*, 1844, 187.

[41] The revival of Catholic theology and teaching in the seminary brought a demand for more flexibility in the use of *The Book of Common Prayer*. The Oxford Movement sought to restore the full faith and worship of the historic Church. Much of the effort of the General Convention of 1844 was a response to Catholic demands.

Polk and the other bishops and deputies to the various national conventions of the Episcopal Church were kept so busy with this internal problem that a strong silence covers their views of greater problems of the nation. One looks in vain to find a reference to the slave controversy in the General Convention Journals before or after the Civil War.[43]

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[42] William W. Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1950), 266.

In connection with the events at the seminary and the friction which existed between parties in the Church, there were unpleasant accusations about individuals, at least one of which resulted in the trial of a bishop. The Right Reverend B. J. Onderdonk, bishop of the Diocese of New York, was accused of immorality and brought before an ecclesiastical trial before his peers in the House of Bishops. The Right Reverend Philander Chase then summoned Bishop Polk among others, as a member of this court. This court was in session from December 16, 1844, until January 3, 1845, and resulted in his acquittal.[44]

On a more cheerful and hopeful note, the Louisiana bishop reported that the Church chose and consecrated six bishops for domestic and foreign missions. He was encouraged by this extension of the church to faraway places, but for him and for those to whom he reported in the diocese there was more work to be done at home.

> These greater movements of the Church, my brethren, while they excite within us emotions of gratitude and admiration, ought to inspire us also with a more deeply seated purpose of stirring up continually the gift of God that is within us and prompt us to take

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[43] General Convention Journals, 1830-1860, passim.

[44] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 9.

> fresh courage in our exertions to set forward all its power and purity the Kingdom of God in the particular field of labor allotted to our care.[45]

Work in the northwestern section of the state had begun on Polk's first visit to Louisiana. It was earlier mentioned that he came into the state on a trip from Arkansas. Leaving Little Rock, he proceeded to a point on the Red River called Dooley's Ferry and "passed over into the disputed territory between Texas and the United States. He then proceeded down the river, beginning about 1,000 miles from its mouth, to visit such points as were accessible and might be future sites for churches.[46]

The first place of any interest which he recorded was the town of Shreveport. This was a trip of about 250 miles miles from where he started and required five days of travel "owing to the general difficulty of navigation and the detention arising from having snagged and sunk the boat on which we were traveling."[47] He described Shreveport as being built on the south bank of the Red River in the parish of Caddo near the foot of the great 180 miles raft which had blocked navigation until Captain Shreve had broken it with his skill. He arrived at the city on Friday, March 22, 1839, and found churchmen he had known in Tennessee. He then visited a small community about fifteen miles from Shreveport where a number of Episcopal families had settled and were eager to build a church and support a clergyman.

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[45] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 10.

[46] Spirit of Missions, September, 1839, 308.

[47] Ibid.

Polk had called on a family who dwelt between the Red and Sabine rivers. They were from Tennessee and the father had been a gallant officer in the late war. Two of his daughters had attended the Female Episcopal Academy in Tennessee and had become accustomed to the Book of Common Prayer which they took with them upon removal to the West. The father felt deeply his responsibility as head of the house, especially with his family removed from well-ordered society and regular worship. He had not been especially careful about religion but then he felt a need for it and asked the bishop to send a priest. The bishop could not promise a clergyman, but instructed the man to gather his family for Sunday worship as "priest of his household."

Polk heard nothing further until the second visit when the gentleman again presented himself to the bishop. In leading the divine praises for his family, he had found his way into faith in our Lord and desired the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for himself, his wife, and their five children. Polk administered to them, noting the "eminent value of our liturgical services," and "the usefulness of our Church institutions for the education of the young in Christian principles."[48]

Bishop Polk returned to Shreveport on Sunday, March 24,

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[48] _General Convention Journal_, 1841, 159.

1839, and preached by appointment to a respectable and attentive congregation. It was the first ministration of the gospel ever performed in the town. He found there a town of 1,000 persons, which had no religious services of any kind and which offered him a lot for a church and $1,000 toward the building fund. He chose this as the most important place in the future of northern Louisiana due to its location and the fertility of the soil. He also found the inhabitants somewhat ". . . rude but not more than might be expected from an active border population, filled with the spirit of enterprise," and therefore especially in need of ". . . constant impression of the Gospel influence."[49]

Shreveport was one of the places visited by John Burke of Natchitoches in 1842 on his Prayer Book distribution tour, but it was not until 1845 that the bishop returned to the area. He journeyed up the Red River on the steamer Yazoo, taking advantage of a somewhat receptive group to preach en route.[50] He arrived in the area on Saturday, May 31, 1845, preaching in several places and baptizing two children. On Sunday, June 1, he and William Steel, who lived in the area, conducted three services in the local courthouse at which the bishop preached twice and the priest once. On Monday morning he read Morning Prayer and preached again and then in the afternoon he met with friends of the Church and organized a parish under the name of St. Paul's. (From the number of sermons, it appears he was trying to make up for his three years' absence.) He predicted a bright future for this parish:

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[49] General Convention Journal, 1841, 159.

[50] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 9.

> The interest manifested on this occasion to secure the regular ministrations of the Church, was of the most gratifying character. Measures were immediately taken to erect a suitable church building, and to provide the means for the support of a minister. This point has always been with me of a great interest, in connection with the extension of the Church. It is at the head of unobstructed navigation for the largest class of steamboats employed on the Red River, and the point at which, consequently, merchandise destined for the region further up the river must be reshipped. It is the point also on Red River through which emigrants for Northern Texas must pass, and from which a large part of the State must procure its supplies and ship its products. It is besides surrounded by one of the most fertile districts in our State, inhabited by an intelligent and enterprising population.[51]

The work thus commenced was guided successively by the Reverend Fathers Alexander McLeod, William Steel, and William Scull. Under the latter, the parish changed names from St. Paul's to St. Mark's. On June 12, 1851, St. Mark's officially became a parish of the diocese.[52]

On June 15, 1845, Bishop Polk recorded a visit to the town of Opelousas, where the Reverend John Burke had moved to become president of Franklin College. On this occasion he preached, confirmed two persons, and received one infant into the Church who had been baptized privately.[53] He had planned to go to Opelousas as early as 1839 because he had heard of the presence of a number of church families there. Due to difficulties in finding transportation, he was unable to go at that time and his proposed visit was postponed until March of 1844, when he had visited there and baptized twenty-two persons.[54] He returned on May 12 of that year and held a meeting at which the group resolved to organize a parish, but it was not until April 22, 1855, that St. Mark's Church was organized (which name was subsequently changed to Church of the Epiphany). At the diocesan convention on May 3, 1855, the parish was represented by a prominent physician of St. Landry Parish, Dr. Marston Campbell, who was received as a priest of the diocese.[55]

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[51] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 10.

[52] Diocesan Journal, 1852.

[53] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 20.

Prior to the General Convention of 1847, parishes were also established at Bayou Goula, Franklin, Plaquemines Parish, and Covington, and a third missionary station was begun in New Orleans. Of these, only St. Mary's Church in Franklin and Christ Church, Covington, have any continuing history.

In the four years between 1843 and 1847, when Bishop Polk served full time as bishop of Louisiana, the diocese became well established and parishes were formed in every major section of the state. A missionary society was functioning well in the city of New Orleans, with specialized ministries to seamen, French-speaking citizens, and Negroes, as well as the usual parochial organizations. The bishop himself was the chief missionary in other parts of the diocese and was taking his place with others in the responsibilities of conducting the business of the House of Bishops. In the three years from 1844 to 1847 when the General Convention met once again in St. John's Church, New York City, the Church in Louisiana's prospects were bright for future expansion. Fourteen parishes and eight missionary stations were functioning, and the clergy had shown an increase of eight, for a total of 20, with eight others studying for Holy Orders. The Convention reported 724 communicants, 623 Sunday School pupils, and 71 teachers. Eight new parishes had been established and the diocese had also turned its attention, in response to Bishop Polk's request, to parochial schools "as an important means of advancing learning and pure religion. . . . On the whole, the Diocese of Louisiana has much occasion for gratitude to the Giver of all Good, for the manifest tokens of favor which He has been pleased to bestow . . . and may look forward with confidence to still increasing usefulness in the work of the Divine Master."[56]

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[54] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 124.

[55] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 31.

In a word, the diocese had become established under the authority of the bishop, had developed a general organization, and was fulfilling for the most part its general and special mission at home and to some extent outside.

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[56] General Convention Journal, 1844, 189.

Some of the special ministries have been indicated but others must now be introduced. The organization which grew out of diocesan actions was a structure which has remained as the basic one for carrying out the Church's mission in Louisiana from 1838 to the present and deserves a closer examination. The diocesan efforts in the field of education also merit a closer examination, as do the church's and Bishop Polk's attitude, policy, and program directed toward the slave population.

# CHAPTER XII

## SPECIAL NEW ORLEANS MISSIONS, THE MARINER'S CHURCH AND THE FRENCH CHURCH

About 1812 steam navigation was introduced on the Mississippi River. Prior to that time trade between New Orleans and the Upper Mississippi was limited to barge traffic, each carrying approximately 100 tons on an annual trip. Enterprising merchants found the port of New Orleans a place of opportunity because it controlled the lower Mississippi and its trade. It was also a place to expand the work of the Church, and a fervent appeal was made to send missionaries into this fertile field.[1]

Churchmen in New Orleans felt that a special ministry was needed for the large transient population of sailors and river crewmen who spent some time in the city. As early as 1825, James Hull, the rector of Christ Church, had taken the initiative to create a ministry to seamen. He called a meeting in the public press to form a "Mariner's Church Society," a recreation-information-religious service agency for the benefit of seamen.[2] Hull's appeal was eloquent and effective and resulted in a large enrollment of gentlemen in the Society. They offered their services and some made liberal donations for the purpose of erecting a building.[3]

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[1] Board of Missions, Spirit of Missions, November, 1843, 405.

Word spread quickly of the proposed project and the masters of certain American vessels in port expressed a desire to assist in this project. Hence a meeting of all interested captains was called aboard the Grand Turk at seven-thirty on March 11, 1825. Thus began a mission unique within the Episcopal Church in America. The combined efforts of the priest, laymen of Christ Church, and the seamen themselves were successful. A building was erected on several lots near the river on Canal Street. This venture was, however, short-lived, and some contention arose regarding income from the property adjacent to the Mariner's Church and to what purpose the income was dedicated.[4]

The Mariner's Church failed in its initial efforts in spite of the great opportunity and strong promises of support. The building itself was not properly maintained, and became a public nusiance only two years after it was completed.[5] Collapse of such a promising program in such a short period of time indicates that seamen did not attend the church and consequently, the members of the society did not continue their initial enthusiastic support. The first Mariner's Church shortly fell victim to progress: the old customhouse was no longer adequate for the expanding business of the busy port, and the church was removed to clear space for the erection of a new facility suitable to the needs and wealth of the city.[6]

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[2] Louisiana Gazette (New Orleans), March 9, 1825.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The Bee (New Orleans), May 2, 1835.

[5] Ibid., May 20, 1835.

The mission to seamen in the city of New Orleans lay dormant for several years until it was revived again through the offices of Bishop Polk. In his convention address of 1843, the bishop delineated a specific missionary organization and program for the diocese.[7] He urged the diocese to form a Board of Missions for the diocese under the leadership of the bishop. The Board would raise funds and distribute them in three equal parts to the diocesan, domestic missions, and foreign missions.

The project for seamen was one of the first missions in the diocesan category to which Bishop Polk gave his attention. He informed the national Board of Missions that he had had this subject under consideration for some time, and asked them "how he may most effectually promote the spiritual interests of that very large, and dependent class, who frequent the metropolis of his Diocese, the Seamen and Boatmen of New Orleans."[8] Three years later, in 1846, Polk secured the services of the Reverend Charles Whitall as chaplain to the seamen of New Orleans, and established him as pastor of the third Mission Station called the Seaman's Bethel. Whitall began his work as a lay reader but was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Polk while working with the seamen.[9]

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[6] The Bee, June 15, 1835.

[7] Journal of the Fifth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Louisiana, Held in Grace Church, St. Francisville, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the 18th, 19th and 20th January, A.D., 1843 (New Orleans, 1843), 15.

The new chaplain initiated his work with boatmen on April 19, 1846, in a small rented room on Old Levee Street, which was conveniently located near the port.[10] He conducted lay services twice each Sunday with about seventy seamen and members of their families in attendance. He also conducted a Sunday School for forty students with the assistance of five other teachers. In October, the lease on the room expired and Whitall was unhappy about this although he found it noisy and difficult to conduct worship and classes with so many interruptions from the street. In spite of this he reported that "some poor wandering sinners were . . . reclaimed from the error of their ways,"[11] and thirty communicants were added to the church. A second location was rented for the mission on Esplanade Street and made into a neat chapel with seating capacity of 250. Whitall reported a large regular attendance, frequently overflowing, at the three Sunday services as well as at a Friday evening service.

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[8] Spirit of Missions, June, 1843, 180.

[9] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 180.

[10] Spirit of Missions, April, 1846, 47.

[11] Ibid.

Interest in the seaman's mission was strong among the people of the city as well as among ship's masters, five of whom were communicants of the Church. An organ was sent to the chapel by Holmes' Steamship Lines of New York, a church flag was given by the bishop, and a silver communion service was donated by Captain Charles C. Berry of the ship *Silas Holmes*. The Reverend Mr. Diller of Brooklyn gave an altar, which was transported by Captain William G. Berry, and a Mr. Greenleaf contributed a valuable library.[12]

Whitall used Christian literature as a means of spreading the faith and of advertising his work. In the first year of the mission he distributed to the seamen Bibles in the English language, as well as in German, Spanish, Danish, French, and Italian, and manuals of prayer and the Book of Common Prayer, knowing that these would be used on long sea voyages. In his pastoral ministry Whitall visited the ships in port each week and, assisted by various seamen, administered Holy Communion to all who came, and the last rites to thirteen who died. Statistics for the first three years indicate that the chaplain's work was being received and was expanding:

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[12] *Ibid*.

| | 1846 | 1847 | 1848 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baptisms | 37 | 199 | 233 |
| Communicants | 64 | 106 | 124 |
| Confirmations | 8 | 28 | 17 |
| Marriages | 24 | 109 | 100 |
| Funerals | 39 | 215 | 218 |
| S. S. Scholars & Teachers | 52 | 105 | 218 |

He also succeeded in setting up a well-stocked reading room for sailors on shore leave. Books and magazines were available in several languages, both of which were free and some of which for purchase, for the seamen to take aboard ship.[13]

An overall plan was developed by Whitall for a full ministry for seamen in the port of New Orleans on an ongoing basis. Primary was provision for the worship of Almighty God, preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. For this purpose he proposed a fund drive to the City Missionary Society for construction of a permanent chapel.[14] This was approved and a sum was raised for purchase of the Esplanade Street property next to the converted house he was then using. A chapel was built and dedicated under the name of St. Peter's.[15]

Whitall had himself been a sailor for some years and was aware that a place of worship alone would not attract seamen.[16] He proposed that the former temporary chapel be converted into a boarding house for seamen "where they will be free from temptation to excess, and where they may be strengthened and encouraged in good resolution. . . ."[17] The building would also have an apartment for the chaplain and for proper persons to oversee and assist in the operation of the home, reading room, and chapel. With a good business eye, Whitall suggested that income from the home would assure a ministry in "perpetuity to the work of providing for the souls of seamen who may visit New Orleans."[18]

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[13] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 23.

[14] Ibid., 35.

[15] Ibid., 22.

[16] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 34.

All of the above objectives were attained and the chaplain offered testimony to the value of his work:

> . . . and frequently has your Missionary's heart been cheered and encouraged, when, at the administration of the Lord's Supper, he has witnessed the sailor-boy, of 16 years, and the veteran sailor of 60, bowed at the Table, with deep feelings of gratitude and love to their Heavenly Father, for having spared them through another voyage, once more to seal anew their allegiance to the Great Captain of our and their salvation.[19]

French was still the mother tongue for the majority of citizens in New Orleans and in South Louisiana in 1830. Throughout the colonial period it was the language of the streets as well as of commerce and government. There was a large influx of Americans subsequent to the Purchase, but French-speaking citizens continued to come to Louisiana as well. There were former citizens of Switzerland, of French colonies, and of France itself. Although the majority were Roman Catholic, some had a religious background of the various Reformed churches of Europe, such as the Huguenots, French Reformed, Evangelical and Reformed, all of whom followed the Calvinistic tradition, and had French for their mother tongue.[20]

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[17] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 34.

[18] Ibid., 35.

[19] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 23.

Their common French culture, tongue, and religious tradition brought these people together, and to preserve their faith they organized a church about 1830.[21] The congregation constructed a place of worship and a parsonage, and maintained grounds around the church.[22] The brick church, located on the corner of Rampart and Bienville streets, had the services of two Reformed ministers, the Reverend Messrs. Du Fernex and C. Leries.[23] Leries was from Switzerland, as was his wife, and he maintained a school for his support.[24] Both of these ministers fell victims to a yellow fever epidemic and died prior to 1834.[25]

The congregation of the French Church was greatly discouraged owing to the untimely deaths of their ministers, and adding to their woes was a debt of $6,000. This was a small amount compared to the value of the property, but without leadership or management it was difficult to meet payments.[26] At this time the Bishop of Connecticut, the Right Reverend Brownell, was making a missionary tour of the Southwest in company with a priest from the Diocese of Pennsylvania, the Reverend R. A. Henderson.[27] Henderson came to New Orleans with the idea of ministering in the "French Protestant Evangelical Church," apparently without an invitation from the Consistory of that church.[28] Nonetheless, he began to minister there and made an official report on his work to the convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in New Orleans, in January, 1835.[29]

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[20] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 79.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Diocesan Journal, January 20, 1835, 7.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 79.

[25] Diocesan Journal, January 20, 1835, 7.

Shortly after his arrival, Henderson reported that "a gleam of light is now cheering this scene of darkness and death."[30] Divine services were conducted every Sunday in both English and French and attracted large numbers of worshippers. He conducted also a unique Sunday School for more than fifty pupils, which he claimed was the first of its kind in America: instruction was given in three languages for the French, Spanish, and American children who attended.[31]

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[26] Diocesan Journal, January 20, 1835, 7.

[27] Thomas C. Brownell, "Bishop Brownell's Journal of His Missionary Tours of 1829 and 1834 in the Southwest," in the Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, VII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 319.

[28] A Vindication of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Composed of Delegations from the Dioceses of Mississippi and Alabama and the Clergy and Churches of Louisiana, Held in Christ Church, in the City of New Orleans, on the 4th and 5th days of March, A.D., 1835, 15. Hereinafter referred to as Vindication.

[29] Diocesan Journal, January 20, 1835, 7.

[30] Ibid.

Henderson pleaded for larger support for this work because 30,000 citizens of New Orleans spoke French, and his was the only Protestant church where worship was conducted in that language. His appeal won the attention of those present at the Convention of 1835, and the following resolution was adopted:

> That the French Evangelical Church, in this city, on acceding to the constitution and canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the state of Louisiana, be admitted into union with this convention, under the name of the "*Church De La Resurrection*, in the city of New Orleans."[32]

The question raised by this resolution was whether Christians of the Reform tradition could in conscience submit to the constitution, canon, and liturgy of a Catholic church. It was never satisfactorily answered, although for forty years or so the French group enjoyed some support by fellow Christians in the Episcopal Church.

Owing to the attention given to the formation of a diocese, churchmen in Louisiana did not back wholeheartedly the activities of the French group. Henderson belonged to one faction whose efforts failed to bring a diocese into being and he left New Orleans four months after his arrival.[33] The consistory of the French group had never wanted Henderson's services from the first, but did offer him the use of their church as a courtesy. By reporting on the state of their parish to an Episcopal convention, Henderson incurred the rebuke of the consistory. He further alienated the consistory when, without their permission, he set in motion a subscription to pay the debts of the parish. This body addressed a letter to the Assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania, Henderson's superior, informing him that Henderson had left New Orleans and could not expect use of the parish when he returned. Although Henderson referred to this parish as the "French Protestant Episcopal Church," it was in fact Calvinistic in theology and Presbyterian in polity.[34] Many of those who attended service while he was there were members of Christ Church interested in establishing a strong French-speaking congregation for the Episcopal Church, but this united effort failed and the French Church languished.

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[31] *Diocesan Journal*, January 20, 1835, 7.

[32] *Ibid*., 8.

The consistory of the French Church continued to exist as an organization although its activities were limited. They must have given up the idea of continuing as a distinct worshipping community, for they sold their organ to the newly-organized St. Paul's parish in 1838. At the insistence of L. C. Duncan, a member of Christ Church and the French Church, a debt of $500 contracted for the organ from the French Church was forgiven by the consistory.[35] Most members of the French Church worshipped in the Episcopal Church but continued the French reformed identity by maintaining a paper organization. However, a strong enough sentiment existed to prompt further efforts for a separate church.

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[33] Vindication, 16-17.

[34] Ibid., 17.

Bishop Polk desired to extend the bounds of the church in every direction and, indeed, to all men. In 1842, he appealed for ministries to the French-speaking people of South Louisiana, to Indians, and to Negroes. He had first mentioned the French-speaking citizens in a report in 1839 on conditions in the Natchitoches area when he noted that one-third of the 2;500 souls in residence were Creole French.[36] In this instance he made an appeal for a missionary, not to them, but to the other two-thirds who had "no one to baptize their children, to bury their dead, or to break the bread of life to the perishing living."[37] Evidently there was a Roman Catholic clergyman ministering there and the idea of an Episcopal priest seeking a French-speaking ministry had not yet occurred to Polk.

On another occasion, Bishop Polk pointed out the failure of the Roman Church to reach the people. Shortly after the convention in St. Francisville, when visiting the Bayou Teche country, he wrote in his journal, "I know of no field in the diocese, of the same extent, where a clergyman, particularly if he spoke the French language, could do more good."[38]

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[35] Diocesan Journal, 1842, 33.

[36] Spirit of Missions, September, 1839, 310.

[37] Ibid.

The Bishop began services in the Atakapas country by preaching in the courthouse on Wednesday, April 15, 1844, and baptized twenty-seven children and five adults, including seven Negroes. Since he had no priest immediately available to send, he appointed two lay readers who could begin regular worship in the daily offices until a priest could bring a sacramental ministry.

The Reverend Lucius M. Purdy of the Diocese of New York began to labor in the St. Martinville section on November 1, 1844. Services were conducted in English and French, but the majority were in English as requested by the people. The new rector requested prayer books in both languages in order that he might continue his bilingual work.[39] The result was Zion Church, St. Martinville, and St. Luke's Church in Lafayette--both of which were soon admitted to union with the diocese.[40] Purdy described the opportunity among these mixed English-French thus:

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[38] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 7.

[39] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 22.

[40] Ibid., 47.

> Irreligion and vice are sadly prevalent in this long neglected field. More laborers are needed in the good work, such as will persevere in the face of every discouragement. It is hoped some provision will be made for their support.[41]

Meanwhile, the remnants of the Old French Church in New Orleans took on new life with the arrival of a French-speaking priest, the Reverend Thomas D. Ozanne. Ozanne commenced his duties with the newly-organized L'Eglise Protestante Francaise on April 1, 1847.[42] He visited French families and conducted the liturgy in French in Christ Church at 1 P.M. on Sundays. The attendance was small, owing to the unusual time fixed for the service, but it was the only time the church was not being otherwise used. He reported that the French population had increased, and he was confident that by hard work he could plant a church where the "pure truth of the gospel" would be preached. The bishop gave his warmest approval and the French Church was admitted as a parish of the diocese on May 3, 1848.

In a brief time the vestry restored the church formerly used for worship at the corner of Bienville and Rampart.[43] The rector continued to visit French families and conduct services and Bible classes for children and adults. He found, however, that these people had been so long accustomed to being without religious instruction that they were unreceptive to his efforts. He sought to awaken a "sense of their responsibility to God and to their souls, but with comparatively unimportant results." He felt that results would be a long time in coming, so he resigned April 1, 1849.[44]

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[41] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 48.

[42] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 30.

[43] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 19.

Later the Reverend C. H. Williamson became rector of the French Church. He remained for a period of six years, long enough to establish a pastoral relationship with the people. The church grew slowly, and improvements were made to the property through the liberality of interested churchmen like L. C. Duncan and G. B. Duncan who worshipped at Christ Church and the French Church.[45]

Williamson resigned in 1856 and Francois Louis Michel, a native of Switzerland, was appointed lay reader by the bishop.[46] Michel wanted to apply for Holy Orders and continue this parish as an Episcopal Church, but sentiment was still strong among the parishioners for use of their own liturgy. The people found it difficult to adjust to the French translation of the Anglican rite and applied to Bishop Polk to use their own service. The Bishop "notwithstanding the scriptural and otherwise unexceptional character of their liturgy" had no power under the canons to substitute a French reformed liturgy for the Book of Common Prayer.[47]

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[44] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 19.

[45] Diocesan Journal, 1845-1856, passim.

[46] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 60.

In view of the attitude of the congregation, Michel elected to withdraw his candidacy for the priesthood. The bishop agreed to the establishment of a special body to whom the vestry leased the property as an independent parish. Unable to continue on this basis, the congregation dispersed, and the property was ultimately sold. Although the parish was not dropped from diocesan rolls until 1874, it had long since ceased to exist.

The failure of the French Church to continue as a parish of the diocese brought to an end the efforts of the Episcopal Church to reach the large French-speaking population in Louisiana. It was an effort to incorporate a group whose theology, polity, and liturgy were different from the Episcopal Church, but it need not have failed for those reasons alone. Had emphasis been placed on those great areas of agreement which all Christians share in common, the French Church may have survived. If the parish could have maintained contact with the bishop and convention, the differences would have gradually been worked out. But Bishop Polk had no authority to preserve ties with a group which specifically rejected Catholic order and worship.

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[47] Diocesan Journal, 1857, 58.

## CHAPTER XIII

## EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS IN THE DIOCESE,

## 1825-1860

"The mission of the Church is that of a teacher. She is to train the heart for the love and service of her Lord and Master; and the mind, also, in order that she may thereby the more surely and efficiently control the heart."[1] This was Polk's earnest plea to the diocesan convention of 1845 to adopt a general plan of education of the youth of the diocese in order that they might receive both sound learning and pure religion. He made it explicit that education was as much a part of the divine commission of the church as anything else. "The education of our children should be in our hands," he said, concluding that others might do it well but the church could educate better because of her particular gifts. The church, he felt, should lend a maternal hand to the molding of a child intellectually, socially, and morally in addition to its unique responsibility of inculcating proper spirituality. To this end he proposed to the convention of 1845 ". . . that the rule should be to have a School or Schools connected with each Parochial Cure, and placed under the general supervision of the several parish clergy."[2]

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[1] Journal of the Seventh Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Louisiana, Held in St. John's Church, West Baton Rouge, On the 3d and 4th of April, 1845 (New Orleans, 1845), 10. Hereinafter cited as Diocesan Journal.

Bishop Polk's strong request for an educational program was not new as there had been efforts at education in the Louisiana Episcopal parishes since 1805. Philander Chase came to Louisiana specifically to start a church, but circumstances prompted him to direct his efforts toward education as well. Chase had come on one ship as a passenger while his household belongings had come on another, the brig Polly Eliza. In the passage from New York to New Orleans, the Polly Eliza wrecked on a Cuban beach and all his possessions, books, clothing, furniture, and stores were lost.[3] This left him with an empty purse and no resources from home or from a missionary society ". . . to lift up dropping hands and strengthen feeble knees." The salary from his pastoral duties being inadequate to his needs, and those of his family, Chase returned to his former vocation which he had exercised in Poughkeepsie: school teaching.

In 1807 the only schools existing in the Territory of Orleans were those maintained by the Ursuline nuns for children of the Roman Church, and several private schools in

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[2] Diocesan Journal, 10.

[3] Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences: An Autobiography (2 vols., 2nd ed.; Boston, 1848), I, 74.

New Orleans. There was no school maintained by church or state for the increasing population of Americans, most of whom were non-Roman. The need for a school for these children was equal to their need and desire for a church, and since Chase was well aware of the educational need he proceeded to supplement his income by maintaining a school. He rented a house a short distance below the town and, with the help of a domestic slave named Jack, began to take pupils.[4] The school was so successful from the beginning that he proposed moving into town. After this was done the school attracted an increased number of students from the city, ". . . and not a few came from the country and towns up the river: the Dunbars and Giraults from the Natchez; the Sterlings and the Barrows from Bayou Sara; the Percys and evanses from Pinkneyville and Fort Adams; all the choicest and the best."[5]

Chase believed that his school was of sufficient quality to attract the children of the intelligent and educated people of the city and territory. He indicated that the parish began to flourish along with the school. Continued success of the school made it necessary to move again to larger quarters. He leased "extensive buildings" from M. La Branch on Tchoupitoulas Street, which were then on the levee in the Fauxbourg of St. Mary, for an annual rent of

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[4] Chase, Reminiscences, 25.

[5] *Ibid.*, 93.

$1,000. "Here he spent some of the most laborious, yet perhaps the most useful days of his life." He was aware that "he was laying the foundation of a Christian and virtuous education in some of the best families in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana."[6]

Chase's final address before leaving New Orleans in 1811 was to the children whom he had taught and to their parents. In it he gave a hint of his philosophy of education: "Remember the sum and substance of your instruction, that religion is the chief thing; and to this the acquisition of every branch of science should aim, and that without this the wisest man, in the eyes of his Maker, is but a fool."[7] Chase taught the youth in "natural and literary science" as well as in religion and morality, but it was the lack of facilities for higher education which caused him to leave New Orleans because he felt an "imperative duty of educating his sons left in New England." His interest in education continued long after he left Louisiana and became Bishop of Ohio. In this latter office he toured England and solicited the assistance of Lords Kenyon and Bexley for the founding of Kenyon College at Gambier, Ohio, an outstanding institution of higher learning which continues to function to this day. But in regard to his school in New Orleans, its fate was to be that of many small private and church schools, since its only leadership was in the person who taught. When that person left the school stopped. Dozens of such schools were to emerge, have a life span of several years, and then collapse with the departure of the teachers.

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[6] Chase, Reminiscences, 100.

[7] Ibid., 101.

William Winans had come to New Orleans as a Methodist missionary in 1813, and like Chase he set up a school to support himself. As the Episcopal Church was without a priest, Christ Church members began to attend services which Winans conducted in his school on Sundays. These churchmen were interested in the education of their children and the conduct of public worship, and since they had no services of their own, they attended the Methodist meetings. When a proposal was made by the vestry authorizing Richard Relf and R. M. Welman to revive the lottery scheme for building a church, the vestry authorized on March 27, 1814, Hennen and J. W. Smith to invite Winans to preach to the members of Christ Church rather than struggle to gather a new congregation.[8] The relationship of Winans with Christ Church ended with the arrival of James Hull who was asked to preach and was later ordained in the Episcopal Church.

Hull, like Chase and Winans, was forced to open a school owing to his financial needs and the obvious necessity of a place to educate young people. Hull had such a school in operation by 1822; his efforts were recognized at once,

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[8] *Vestry Minutes of Christ Church*, New Orleans, March 27, 1814. Hereinafter cited as *Vestry Minutes*.

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and he was offered the presidency of the College of Orleans. After talking the matter over with the vestry he was given permission to accept the post if he wished to do so.[9] However, he declined and continued to operate the Hull School which was considered the best in New Orleans; it continued as a fine school under his daughter's administration until her death after the Civil War. Hull gave personal attention to the students in reading, writing, geography, and universal history.

Outside of New Orleans, the first effort by Episcopalians to organize a school took place in Baton Rouge in 1819. William Jennison, who came to the city in response to requests by interested churchmen, was "a lay reader and teacher of the young," a layman who was primarily a teacher but who was also a keenly interested churchman, combining two vocations as did the clergy.[10] This is the only instance in the early history of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana in which a layman began the dual work of education and parish work. In 1820 Jennison had an act passed by the legislature incorporating the Academy of Baton Rouge as the first educational institution organized in that city.[11] Its fate was like that of the early parish in Baton Rouge; it closed when the teacher left the city in 1823 and remained closed for many years. Section Four of the charter authorized the Academy to raise $10,000 by lottery, and this scheme failed to build the school as it had also failed to build churches in Louisiana.

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[9] Vestry Minutes, n.d., 1823.

[10] St. James Church, Baton Rouge, The Messenger, VI, No. 10 (March, 1910), 1.

[11] Ibid.

The next mention made of any school in the diocese is again in Baton Rouge. The Reverend Roderick Ranney was rector of Grace Church in St. Francisville at the time of the organizing convention of the diocese in April, 1838.[12] At the same convention a constitution for the new diocese was proposed and Article III specified the make-up of a diocesan convention. It provided that all priest of the Church who had resided in the state for six months and had officiated "in some Parish in the State; Clerical Instructors of Youth and Chaplains in the Army and Navy . . . shall be members of the Convention."[13] This recognition given to clergy who spend their full time teaching was written into the constitution both because this was a common clerical occupation and because this had been the experience of the churches in Louisiana.

When the next convention met, there were two priests in Louisiana who were "Clerical Instructors of Youth": the Reverend William B. Lacey, D.D., president of a new College at Baton Rouge, and Ranney, who had moved from St. Francisville to Baton Rouge to become professor of mathematics at the same institution.[14] Bishop Polk was scheduled to visit these two clergymen in September, 1840, but missed his boat and was disappointed. In his account of the journey he gave the first hint of his future interest in education. "The best results for both learning and piety may be, I think, confidently anticipated from the influence of this seminary."[15] Here he expressed the two-fold purpose of having schools--sound learning and pure religion--which he was later to develop into a diocesan system of schools and a sectional university.

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[12] Diocesan Journal, 1838, 4.

[13] Ibid., 5.

Bishop Polk had the advantage of an academy education in his boyhood in North Carolina. He attended the academy of the Reverend Dr. McPheters in Raleigh but he records little in his papers regarding this phase of his life.[16] In the person of McPheters he had an early exposure to a teacher-clergyman, a not uncommon combination of that day, and perhaps this influence planted early seeds for the schemes of education which he developed as a bishop. Education was an important part of a clergyman's training for his work of teaching religion and in leading men to live harmoniously with each other.

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[14] Diocesan Journal, 1839, 6.

[15] Board of Missions, Spirit of Missions, V, No. 9 (September, 1840), 285.

[16] William M. Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General (New York, 1915), 63-64.

The immediate background of Polk's educational plan for the diocese was the appearance of several priests who were spending the major part of their time in educational work, exercising their ministry only on Sundays. Colleges appeared at Jackson, Baton Rouge, and Franklin almost simultaneously. Episcopalians were generally an educated people: when they came to an area which provided no schools, they were determined to provide these facilities and called clergymen to be teachers and administrators. The college at Baton Rouge began in 1839 with two clergymen in residence, but by 1844 Lacey had moved to the College of Louisiana at Jackson. He soon resigned that position to assume the presidency of a new college for young ladies, The Southern Institute for Ladies (also called The Female Academy) which began in 1844 and was also located in Jackson. Meanwhile, at Opelousas yet another academy was founded, Franklin College. In 1844 the Reverend John Burke resigned his parish at Natchitoches in order to become president of this new institution of learning.[17]

The bishop had had a long-standing interest in education, *per se*, and as the diocesan missionary he saw in the development of schools an opportunity to meet a real need and to extend the work of the Church. He presented the 1844 convention with the concept of establishing schools in every parish of the diocese. This proposal was a distinct and marked change from the type of schools which had been conducted in Louisiana. Heretofore, they were private ventures either of priests, for personal support, or of laymen, which clergy were invited to operate. In his new plan the bishop wanted schools to be an integral part of every parish program and teaching to be the function of every priest. To fulfill such an ambitious program would require the official sanction of the convention and the complete support and cooperation of every priest and layman in the diocese. Such support came in the form of a resolution, "That a committee of five be appointed to consider the expediency of instituting one seminary, or more, in the diocese, to be placed under the auspices and superintendence of the Convention."[18] This was a modest response and did not seem to encompass the sweeping program of the bishop. The Reverend Charles Lacey, Charles Fay, Judge Thomas Butler, John Lobdell, and J. Minturn were appointed to the committee and asked to report before the adjournment of convention. This committee met once and recommended that it was highly expedient that an overall plan be developed for a diocesan school system.[19]

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[17] *Diocesan Journal*, 1844, *passim*.

The diocese convened next at St. John's Church, West Baton Rouge, on April 3-4, 1845. In his charge to the convention the bishop again pointed to the need for schools and again suggested that ". . . the rule should be to have a

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[18] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 20.

[19] Ibid., 23.

School or Schools connected with every Parochial cure . . ." and that there should be few exceptions to this. Wisely, he pointed out to the assembly that the success of this plan depended entirely on ". . . an intelligent and hearty cooperation among all the members of the . . . Household, Clerical and Lay." The response to the bishop's continuing pleas came in the form of a well-developed diocesan educational plan which the convention itself further amended.[20]

> Whereas, It is the solemn duty of the Church to provide for the intellectual and religious training of the young within her pale, therefore, resolved by the Diocese of Louisiana, that for the accomplishment of this end there shall be established a Board of Education to consist of five persons, to be annually chosen by the Convention, of which Board, The Bishop of the Diocese shall always be *ex officio* Chairman, and to this Board shall be confided the supervision of the work of Education in the Church.[21]

This resolution clearly indicated that the Church in Louisiana considered the education of young people, in both general and religious subjects, to be the mission of the Church. Furthermore, it recognized that the bishop of the diocese as the person chiefly responsible for carrying out the church's mission in education. The education board was to meet at least annually to deliberate on opportunities in the diocese and to present a report to the convention on the state of schools in the diocese. At these meetings a speaker appointed by the bishop was to give an address on the subject of education for the edification of the board members.

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[20] *Diocesan Journal*, 1845, 14.

[21] *Diocesan Journal*, 1844, 12.

In the first year's operation the board was specifically charged with a dual job: fact-finding and fund-raising. A survey was to be made throughout Louisiana to procure statistics on a number of matters: the number of educables, the willingness of churchpeople to support schools, the best locations for schools, and the course of study most desired. Their second job was to raise an Education Fund, upon the outcome of which venture would rest the future of the diocesan school system.

Each priest was given a specific responsibility to proceed at once with the formation of parish schools should it be expedient. It was understood, however, that the Board of Education was to keep informed of any such action and that such schools would be ". . . subject to the controlling action of that body."[22] Since all of the clergy had to meet certain educational standards in their own training, the board assumed, perhaps rightly, that a priest's education was sufficient for teaching. Teachers in the schools, including the clergy, were to be subject to the controlling action of the board. Upon nomination of the bishop as its head, the board was to make all appointments of teachers to diocesan schools after ascertaining their qualifications. The board, with approval of the bishop, also had powers to remove teachers for sufficient cause.

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[22] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 15.

The bishop was designated as visitor for all schools in the diocese connected with the church, and he was to prescribe curricula, books, type of religious services, and material to be studied regarding the doctrine, ritual, and government of the Church. The bishop also installed through the convention a system of recognizing schools and giving them continued supervision. When an individual priest or layman wished to establish a "private Literary Institution" in the diocese, that person must first submit information regarding the proposed school and his personal qualifications, and then receive a license as a teacher of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana. After issuing a license the bishop appointed three people as visitors whose function was to oversee the school's operation by regular visits and make written reports to him and the diocesan Board of Education.[23]

The convention pledged itself to carry, through this system, the work of education to every corner of the diocese and, furthermore, to circularize the church at large to enter into a corporate effort with others who were operating or sought to operate schools. Lobdell entered a further report to the convention on behalf of the seminary committee and pointed out that here was a golden opportunity for the seminary committee to give immediate implementation to the scheme of education passed by the convention. The legislature of the State of Louisiana had passed an act directing the sale of the property of Louisiana College in St. James Parish ". . . Land, Buildings, Fixtures, Library, Philosophical and Chemical Apparatus, Furniture, etc. . . ." for a sum of $10,000. The only stipulation was that the college be maintained as a Literary Institution. The act also specified that it could be sold to a "Religious Society"; therefore, it was available to the Episcopal Church. The seminary committee recommended purchase of this facility for a seminary and for other educational needs by the diocese. Since there was a great demand for such an institution and since the diocese was trying to start such schools, the committee felt that the money could be easily raised in Louisiana. They proposed that money be raised also for the endowment of scholarships and professorships. But the proposed plan failed. No reason was given. The records show only that "the report was laid on the table."[24] Perhaps there had been good reasons not to purchase the site, but the records indicate only that a good thing was passed by.

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[23] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 15.

A year passed before reports were made again on the progress of schools in the diocese. The bishop indicated in his annual address delivered in St. James Church, Baton Rouge, on May 22, 1846, that less had been done in response to his request than he had hoped. Yet he was optimistic and felt that there was hope and reasonable ground for believing that a school system would develop throughout the diocese.[25]

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[24] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 17.

The Reverend Dr. Francis Lister Hawkes, rector of Christ Church in New Orleans, chairman of the committee, reported to the convention in the same tone. Hawkes was a scholar of national reputation and was eminently qualified to lead the diocese in its effort to establish an educational system. (His own talents were given recognition in New Orleans when he was elected the first president of the University of Louisiana, an institution later known as Tulane University.)[26]

The Committee on Education reported that it had not been able to collect all the information needed to formulate a complete program for the diocese. Clerical cooperation was a necessary condition to obtain this information, but this was not forthcoming because the laity suggested that the clergy be excluded from leadership in institutions of learning. It was "perfectly obvious" to the committee that the clergy have been the "best friends and most efficient laborers in the cause of education" and without their help there would be no educational system for the diocese or for anyone else.[27] There were a number of priests who had already maintained schools: Lacey had the Southern Institute for Young Ladies at Jackson. John Burke, who was now the rector of both St. James' in Baton Rouge and St. John's, West Baton Rouge, also had schools. There were also schools at Christ Church in New Orleans, and at St. Francisville and New Roads.

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[25] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 15.

[26] "Francis Lister Hawkes (1789-1866)," in Dictionary of American Biography (21 vols.; New York, 1928-1943), VIII, 416.

[27] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 16.

The Southern Institute for Young Ladies is typical of these small schools which were beginning to develop and is described by the priest. It began operation in 1847 under direct and exclusive control of Lacey. There were thirty-seven pupils enrolled, twenty of whom resided with the rector's family. The course of study included English, French, geography, arithmetic, history, physiology, natural philosophy, chemistry, rhetoric, intellectual philosophy, logic, algebra, elecution, instrumental and vocal music, drawing, and painting. The students worshiped on Sundays and were taught the catechism and outlines of theology in lectures. "Great pains are taken to imbue the minds of the pupils with principles of pure morality and scriptural Christianity."[28] Burke's school at Baton Rouge, called the "Classical and Mercantile Boarding Day School," was operated for boys with the specific end in view of raising native sons of the soil for the ministry.[29]

A motion was presented to the convention and adopted that the schools in Jackson and Baton Rouge be recognized as

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[28] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 17.

[29] Ibid., 18.

Diocesan Schools. The delegates further moved that the bishop urge every priest and layman in the diocese to make a maximum effort to establish schools throughout the diocese and that an educational fund be established at once. In order to keep check on the clergy, the resolution also stated that each priest was to make a report in writing to each convention ". . . of what is being done in his Parish in the work of education, under the auspices of the Church." The lives of most of these small schools were brief because they were centered too much in the person of the particular priests who ran them. Although the diocesan structure seemed adequate to guarantee an ongoing life, it was never fully implemented to give these schools any recognition apart from that of the clergyman who ran them. Since the total educational system was made up of these small and rather independent units, it is necessary to trace the development of a few in order to understand the inner workings of the system as such.

One school recognized as a Diocesan Institution by the convention of 1846 was the Burke's male academy in Baton Rouge which was reported to be in a flourishing condition at that time.[30] The next year the rector reported a wonderful improvement in the intellectual condition of his school since it had become a diocesan center. "To this the young gentlemen are themselves willing and happy to bear honorable testimony. The great objects of the institution, as stated in the prospectus, are moral culture, based on pure Christian principles, sound scholarship, good manners, order, system and persevering industry."[31]

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[30] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 17.

Another purpose of this school established by the diocese was to train local men for the priesthood, but no scholarships were set up for this purpose and no candidate was available. Perhaps this discouraged Burke, for in the course of the next year he disengaged himself from the academy in order to devote more time to his clerical duties. However, he retained sufficient interest in education to organize a female institution in the same town.[32]

Similar institutions began operations, continued for a few years, and with the departure of the priest ceased to exist. Of particular interest was the work of the Reverend Elijah Guion who operated several such schools, in addition to his clerical duties, in several parishes. One post he held was principal of the Rapides Female Seminary near Alexandria which was established by the rector, wardens, and vestry of St. James' Church in full accord with the provisions for a Diocesan School. The bishop was ex-officio visitor with the rector of St. James, the Reverend Amos D. McCoy, and several laymen of St. James' Church. The Rapides Female Seminary was supported through donations from local churchmen and friends of New Orleans and had accommodations for fifty students. It was equipped with a complete "Philosophical and Chemical apparatus" by means of contributions obtained in New York City by the rector.[33]

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[31] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 11.

[32] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 45.

The Committee on Education reported annually to the convention on the condition of the various seminaries of learning, and there were varying degrees of success in the education of young people of both sexes. Out of the experience of the academies and the bishop's continuing interest in education came a proposal for an advancement to a high level: "I am of the opinion that the time is now arrived when the diocese may begin to take steps, however incipient, for the establishment of a school for the education of boys, upon a more advanced scale than any we have hitherto had."[34] The bishop warned the convention that similar ventures had met with failure in other places and that the effort in Louisiana would be to get one phase well established before moving to a full seminary on a "larger scale." The committee took steps to strengthen the work in the established schools and to move cautiously to more advanced courses of study.[35]

The committee continued its work of promoting and overseeing parochial schools and not a convention met in which long reports and strong resolutions were not passed to continue this work until the committee was abolished in 1859. But the years subsequent to 1850 saw their work take a new direction through the guidance and direction of Bishop Polk. Their report in 1852, given in response to the bishop's request for a school of higher learning, is of particular significance both for its content and its resolution. It was the work of the learned Dr. Lacey and reviews the need for such a school.[36]

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[33] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 16.

[34] Diocesan Journal, 1850, 18. [35] Ibid., 27.

In a preamble to the report Lacey outlined the need for church schools because the public education system in Louisiana was almost nonexistent, and even if it developed it could not provide the four "R's" of Christian education. Many church schools existed in the North but were inaccessible to Louisiana Episcopalians, hence the Church in Louisiana was thrown on its own resources to ". . . provide seminaries of sound learning and true religion." He presented five arguments showing why such a school was necessary. He argued that ". . . in the light of history, we perceive that that branch of the Church Catholic from which we have descended, has, in every stage of its career, been devoted to the promotion of sound learning, in connection with Christian piety."[37] He began this historical review in the fourth century and pointed to the great scholars from Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin as products of Anglican scholarship. "In the light of history, we turn to the Word of God, we shall see that the Church of Christ is charged with a mission of universal improvement."[38] Hence a part of the church's mission was to educate the youth. ". . . The church of Louisiana, not only has a mission in common with the Church Catholic, to improve the world, but is under obligations somewhat peculiar to itself."[39] The "obligations" arose from the fact that no decent educational system existed in the South, and this lack was producing a society governed by the "idle, ignorant and effiminate." Episcopalians were better educated than the average citizen, and they therefore had a particular duty to provide colleges. It was the primary means of attracting others to the Episcopal Church, and a challenge came before the convention, which responded with a series of resolutions urging such a school, soliciting funds, preaching on the subject, and ending with this note, "That the union of Christianity and secular education is a matter of paramount importance, and that we will, henceforth, unite in promoting such an education."[40]

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[36] _Diocesan Journal_, 1852, 35.

[37] _Ibid_., 32.

This proposal caused considerable interest in Louisiana but very little concrete action was taken toward the founding of a school. The resources of the small diocese were largely expended in consolidating and perpetuating parochial organization, and there was simply not enough strength and collective effort available to initiate a school of higher learning. Furthermore, the financial resources of Louisiana churchmen were insufficient for so large an undertaking. The bishop came to the conclusion that an inter-diocesan effort was necessary and, accordingly, he addressed a public letter to the bishops of nine other dioceses on July 1, 1856, ". . . proposing a union of our respective resources for founding such an institution, or institutions, as might serve us all adequately and thoroughly, and at a comparatively small cost to each."[41]

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[38] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 35.

[39] Ibid., 37.

[40] Ibid., 43.

Bishop Polk knew that Louisiana's resources were inadequate for a first-rate school such as he believed was both possible and necessary for churchpeople in the South. He also knew that similar efforts in the other dioceses of the southeastern section of the United States had been unproductive, hence he began to envision a sectional effort. The idea of such a school had long been a part of his thinking, and circumstances of the mid-1850's simply crystallized the idea. The first suggestion of this concept of a great university in the South appeared in 1831 while he was touring Europe.[42] While abroad he was exposed to the liberal education system of European universities, which he found to be superior to his own technical education at West Point. In fact, he surveyed the entire educational system of the United States and felt there was not a university worthy of the name. His own section of the country had, he felt, the poorest part of a poor system. Southerners attended northern institutions and the South was not developing culture and literature for lack of its own higher institutions of learning.[43] The South also thought of itself as a distinct section and felt the need for Southern institutions to teach the young in its own tradition.

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[41] Diocesan Journal, 1857, 28. See also: Leonidas Polk, A Letter to the Rt. Rev. Bishops of Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina from the Bishop of Louisiana, New Orleans, 1856. Reprinted in Telfair Hodgeon (ed.), the Reprints of the Documents and Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the University of the South Prior to 1860 (Sewanee, 1880), 4ff.

Bishop Polk was not willing to advocate a hasty scheme simply to overcome sectional deficiencies or temporary problems (although both influenced his thinking). He had given thought and effort to various plans of education since becoming Bishop of Louisiana. His earliest biographer claims that, although he had no sympathy with the Know-Nothing Party, he was alarmed by a rapid increase of immigration as a danger to the American system. He also indicated some dismay at the growth of manufacturing and the increase of urban population to the detriment of the rural economy of the South.

Slavery too was a potent factor in his thinking in regard to his university system. Bishop Polk felt that slavery would gradually be abolished, beginning with the border states. The geographic condition of the Western territories would make slavery impractical there. He believed that it should not be forbidden because the Constitution "guaranteed" it, but that conditions would make it an economic impracticability. He viewed the Kansas struggle as a blunder on the part of the North and of the South. Due to soil and climatic conditions, slavery would not have been feasible in Kansas. He felt that the South made an unnecessary political blunder by involving the slavery issue in Kansas. He was opposed also to Cuban annexation because it would further complicate the problems of the South. He felt that the eventual solution to the slavery question was to raise up an educated leadership to lead the South to its destiny.[44]

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[42] Polk Papers, 1831.

[43] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 221.

Another serious consideration was the education of a native ministry which Polk constantly referred to in his journals.[45] "It was his fixed conviction that every country ought to have a native ministry; and to the South, with its peculiar type of civilization, the necessity was particularly great."[46] The clerical makeup of the Southern dioceses indicated that practically all of their priests were educated in the North or in Europe and were considered "outsiders" to the people and institutions of the South as anti-slavery agitation increased. For this same reason good priests in the North were reluctant to come to the South, hence native sons had to be trained in the South to become priests. Polk felt that the slaves would be among the chief beneficiaries of this university because an enlightened leadership would better make the transition to freedom than an unwise group North or South.[47]

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[44] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 224.

[45] Diocesan Journal, 1839-1855, passim.

[46] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 225.

In 1850 there were few institutions of higher learning in the South outside of Virginia, and by 1856 Polk felt the need so urgent that he issued his appeal. His letter was a thoughtful and well-constructed petition to the other bishops which can be summarized from his report to the diocese of Louisiana:

1. The Church has a mission which includes education.

2. No such provision was then being made.

3. No one diocese could possibly do it alone.

4. Together it could be accomplished.

5. It would provide an educated laity and clergy to lead the South "amidst the pecularities of our social condition."

6. The "homogeneous character of the population," similarity of pursuits and institutions made such a union desirable.

7. State-provided education was inadequate in scale for the need because religious teaching was lacking.

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[47] Polk, Bishop and General, I, 225.

8. A center of learning in the South would also provide a place for provincial gatherings of "Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Southern States" for meetings.

9. It would relieve individual dioceses of the Church of their weak efforts and put the South in the front ranks of education.

10. Citizens would be trained for the United States in ". . . the knowledge and practice of the duties of good citizenship."

11. A site accessible by railroad was available.

12. The institution would include a "University with all the Faculties, Divinity included--to be out and out Episcopal, and to be under the exclusive control of the Church."

13. To secure this control Bishops, Clergy, and Laity selected by diocesan conventions would serve as trustees.[48]

Bishop Polk used the gathering of the General Convention in October, 1856, at Philadelphia as an opportune time to convene the bishops of the Southern and Southwestern states to discuss their reaction to his proposal.[49] The result was a joint communique containing a proposed plan of operation, and calling for the election of a supervisory board by the respective dioceses at their next convention. This board met on July 4, 1857, at Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and thus began the University of the South.[50]

It is not necessary to trace here the further history of this university which has continued strongly at Sewanee,

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[48] Diocesan Journal, 1851, 28-29.

[49] Diocesan Journal, 1857, 30.

[50] Ibid., 31.

Tennessee, under the same joint interdiocesan structure suggested by Bishop Polk. It is significant that the weakness and failure of the small schools in Louisiana led Polk to a scheme of education which did bear fruit; it is also notable that the origins of the University of the South are clearly found in the records of Polk's episcopate in Louisiana and the unique conditions, economic, social, and political, of the ante-bellum South.

Schools *qua* schools were not the only form of education in which Bishop Polk and the diocese engaged during his term of office. It was certainly the major and unique effort he put forth in the field, but his energy was directed toward education whether "secular" or "religious." On the purely religious side, the chief instrument of indoctrination was the Sunday school. The Sunday school movement in the United States reached a minor apex in the ante-bellum period and was accepted and used by Episcopal clergymen. In Louisiana the Sunday school as an adjunct to public worship was usually established when a congregation gathered to form a parish. The first recorded number of Sunday school students was for Christ Church in 1835 when "about 50" were reported.[51] This number grew to 70 in 1839 and there were only 720 in the three parishes when Bishop Polk was elevated to the *cathedra* of the diocese.[52] By the end of the 1850's there were 1,667 of whom 141 were teachers.[53] As a means of evangelizing, efforts were made to bring children into the Sunday school whose parents were not members of the church, and this met with moderate success.[54] The usual curriculum consisted of Bible studies, the history, doctrine, and worship of the church, and in one case the theory and practice of sacred music was included.[55] A parish library for teachers and students was a chief goal of the Sunday school and it was not unusual for a student group of 45 to have more than 300 volumes from which to choose.

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[51] *Diocesan Journal*, January 20, 1835, 6.

[52] *Diocesan Journal*, 1841, 150.

The Church Catechism was the important element of the Sunday school, and each priest was required to teach this to children before they were confirmed.[56] It consisted of a series of questions and answers based on the Scriptures, the creeds, polity, and history of the Church which were taught in the didactic method used since Biblical times. The bishop often catechized in the church when he came to visit a parish.[57] Knowledge of the faith and practice was deemed essential lest the faith be watered down and worship become more magical than mystical.

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[53] Diocesan Journal, 1859, 40-49.

[54] Diocesan Journal, 1842, 33.

[55] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 12.

[56] "The Offices of Instruction," in The Book of Common Prayer, 283-95.

[57] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 18.

Sunday school attendance was voluntary on the part of teachers and students or their parents; consequently, the results were not always encouraging:

> The attendance at Sunday School has been of late irregular, owing partly to the want of books . . . partly to the absence and illness of Teachers; and partly to the general laxity in domestic discipline, and the indifference of parents and children to religious instruction.[58]

Sunday school reports, like the reported sacramental ministrations, indicate that Negro slaves were included with at times a separate place of instruction for themselves. The Reverend Spencer Wall established a Sunday school entirely composed of slave children where oral instructions were given, since none of the students could read or write.[59]

The bishop was both the chief organizer of educational systems, day or Sunday, and, in the course of his visitation, the chief teacher. He taught, preached, wrote, and traveled as a teacher. Scanning his journal and correspondence, one concludes that the bishop was in his own person the center of the diocesan educational system and its chief instructor. It was this interest and this experience, plus the compelling inspiration for the Gospel, which moved him to create the diocesan school system and his plan for the inter-diocesan university.

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[58] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 13.

[59] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 19.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE NEGRO IN THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA

The earliest mention of the Negro in the records of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana was made by Philander Chase shortly after he arrived in New Orleans in 1805.[1] He had just set up housekeeping and started his school, then he found that "where all are owners of slaves, no man can keep house without them." Hence he purchased a nineteen-year-old boy named Jack for five hundred dollars and clothed him. Jack remained only three months before slipping on to the ship Thomas Jefferson bound for Liverpool, and Chase saw him no more. At the time he was distressed over the loss of his servant but later, writing of the event in 1848, he commented ". . . how mature reflection on the evils of slavery would heal the wound."[2]

The above statement is one of the few which refer to the plantation workers as slaves in the Louisiana diocesan records. Every subsequent reference until the establishment of the diocese and the arrival of Bishop Polk is to the

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[1] Philander Chase, Bishop Chase's Reminiscences: An Autobiography (2 vols.; new edition; Boston, 1848), I, 74.

[2] Chase, Reminiscences, I, 75.

"Negroes" or "colored," etc., and these are numerous. Work among Negroes was carried on in Louisiana, as in most other Southern dioceses, under the auspices of the diocese.[3] On the issue of slavery, which was splitting the country into sections between 1830 and 1860 and resulting in divisions within church groups as well, the Episcopal Church remained neutral. The journals of the General Convention are silent on this critical issue, although it is mentioned in the Louisiana Journal of 1855.[4] A commission of bishops appointed by the House of Bishops had drawn up a circular soliciting opinion from the various dioceses as to whether the church should take a position on slavery. Neither the committee's report nor the results of the circular are recorded in the Journals of General Convention.[5]

The Louisiana Journals record numerous instances of pastoral concern for the Negro population by the bishop, the clergy, and the laity, and these people were ministered to both on plantations and in the city. But nowhere in the diocesan or general convention records is any philosophical or general attitude toward Negroes as human beings or toward the institution of slavery spelled out. There is, however, an article entitled simply "Negroes" in the *Spirit of Missions* which gives a detailed missionary approach to Christianizing the Negro and, incidentally, reveals the attitude of some Episcopalians toward Negroes and slavery.[6]

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[3] William W. Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York, 1950), 205.

[4] Journal of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Louisiana, which assembled in St. Paul's Church, in the City of New Orleans, on Friday, May 11, A.D., 1855 (New Orleans, 1855), 115. Hereinafter cited as Diocesan Journal.

[5] Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Assembled in a General Convention, Held in Trinity Church and St. John's Chapel, in the City of New York, from October 5th to October 26th, Inclusive in the year of Our Lord 1853 (Philadelphia, 1854), and General Convention Journal, 1856, passim.

The article is an exhortation to slaveholders ". . . to encourage and promote the Instruction of their Negroes in the Christian Faith." The bishop who wrote this plea began by reminding his readers that their obligation was to bring the "blessings and benefit" of the gospel to deliver ". . . those poor creatures from the pagan darkness and superstition in which they were bred. . . ." Some of the "masters" had found innumerable difficulties in their effort to christianize the Negroes, others found it inexpedient to baptize them because they feared the loss of their slaves by "the change which baptism would make in their condition." One of the chief difficulties asserted by some masters was that slaves were grown people accustomed to licentiousness which Christianity forbade. To this argument against conversion the author pointed out that "heathens have been converted and christianity propagated in all ages, and almost all countries . . ." and that Christians had a profound obligation to change the immoral behaviour by a change of faith.[7]

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[6] Board of Missions, *Spirit of Missions* (November, 1843), 406.

A genuine obstacle was the inability to communicate because of linguistics differences. Negroes who came as adults from Africa spoke a foreign tongue and learned to use only the most basic English (or French) for daily business. He retorted with the argument that "At least some of them, who are more capable and serious than the rest, might be easily instructed both in our language and religion, and then be made use of to convey instruction to the rest in their own language."[8] A clear recognition is given here to Negroes as human souls equal in the sight of God and as human beings equal in capacity to other men in ability to learn and to lead. This was a large task but the author felt that small beginnings would lead to great success.

One necessary condition for missionary efforts toward the Negro was that all masters should observe the Biblical injunction regarding Sunday as a day of rest and worship. Many masters allowed their slaves to work on Sunday in order to provide themselves with ". . . the conveniences of life" thereby making them work seven days each week. This the author considered cruel, unjust, and un-Christian and made worship by and instruction of Negroes impossible. ". . . To say that no consideration of propagating the Gospel of God, or saving the souls of men, is to make the least abatement from the temporal profit of the master. . . ." A more potent objection was offered to the instruction and baptising of slaves because

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[7] Ibid., 407.

[8] Ibid.

> . . . the baptising them when instructed would destroy both the property which masters have in them as slaves bought with their money, and the right of selling them again at pleasure, and that the making them Christians only makes them less diligent and more ungovernable.[9]

Here was an argument which should have deeply disturbed the consciences of those who offered it because it clearly recognized that slaves were human souls whose redemption was possible and that baptism would give them a new freedom, but the imperative of the Gospel to baptize was to be withheld lest they gain the very dignity which the Gospel should give.

A legal answer to emancipation was given:

> . . . that Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least alteration in civil property, or in the duties which belong to civil relations, but in all these respects, it continues persons in the same state as it found them. The freedom which Christianity gives is a freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan, and from the dominion of men in lust and inordinate desires; but as to the outward condition, whatever that was before, their being baptised and becoming Christians makes no manner of change in it.[10]

The Bible and history were used to support this position. It was pointed out that becoming a Christian should make any man "under strong obligations to perform those duties . . . not only from the fear of man but from a sense of duty to God. . . ." Clearly, he argued, becoming a Christian should make a Negro a better slave, an appeal designed to demolish the defences of slaveowners who resisted missionary efforts.[11]

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[9] *Ibid*., 408.

[10] *Ibid*.

As for slaves becoming ungovernable after baptism, the bishop argued that Christianity enjoined not only diligence and fidelity but "obedience for conscience sake." Masters still must enforce obedience when necessary but without "cruel or barbarous treatment of our fellow-creatures." The best way to obtain obedience was, however, by the Christian masters setting a proper example:

> Let them see in you and your families, examples of sobriety, temperance and chastity, and of all the other virtues and graces of the Christian life. Let them observe how strictly you oblige yourselves and all that belong to you to abstain from cursing and swearing, and to keep the Lord's day and the ordinances which Christ hath appointed in the Gospel. Make them sensible, by the general tenor of your behaviour and conversation that your inward temper and disposition is such as the Gospel requires, that is to say, mild, gentle, and merciful, and that as oft as you exercise vigour and severity, it is wholly owing to their idleness or obstinacy.[12]

The above was written in 1727 by the Bishop of London but was adopted in 1843 as a guide for Christian masters and a plea to bring the gospel to Negroes. It accepts and defends the institution of slavery as a proper civil relationship while extending to both slave and master the duty of obedience in their respective states of life as imperatives of the Gospel. This was the official position taken by the

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[11] _Ibid._, 409.

[12] _Ibid._, 410.

Domestic Committee for Missions at the time Leonidas Polk as Bishop of Louisiana began his intense and diligent ministry to Louisiana Negroes on his own plantation, on others, and in the city. Perhaps examination of his own plantation and his relationship with his slaves is in order before survey of the diocesan program.

Bishop Polk's home and early ministry were in the vicinity of Columbia, Tennessee, and it was there that he began his practice of ministering to the Negroes.[13] He was responsible for the construction of St. John's Church and on the day of its consecration he wrote:

> I have said that on the adjoining plantations there are negroes for whose spiritual good this church is in part erected. By the time the white congregation were seated in the body of the church, the door, the vestibule, the gallery, and the staircase were crowded with blacks . . . one old man sitting . . . at the very feet of the clergy. . . . When the whites had communed, a cordial invitation from the bishop was given to the blacks to come forward. . . . Then quite a goodly number came, with much reverence and devotion, to that feast, precious alike to bond and free. Oh! could some of our friends have witnessed that scene, how it would have silenced the suspicion that slave holder values not the soul of his slave.[14]

Thus did Bishop Polk show a concern for the Negro as a soul honorable in God's eyes, and exercised a ministry to him for the next twenty years. In his first missionary journey and subsequent ones he recorded the presence of blacks and the duty and obligation of churchmen to extend the Gospel and

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[13] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 4.

[14] William M. Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General (2 vols.; New York, 1915), I, 178.

Sacraments to them.

The Polk family was wealthy and socially prominent in both North Carolina and Tennessee. James K. Polk, a cousin of the bishop, became President of the United States in 1844 and an affection of kinship existed among the various branches of the family. When he was elected Bishop of Louisiana, Leonidas Polk made arrangements for the conduct of his business affairs when he went on extended journeys for the church. Mrs. Polk was also from a prominent and wealthy family, and, upon the death of her mother, Mrs. Devereux, inherited a considerable estate which could have been paid in cash or Negroes. The bishop recognized Louisiana as a plantation state and decided that he would have a more effective ministry by identifying with the plantation owners and becoming one in Louisiana as he had been in Tennessee. Thus he made a critical decision and bought Leighton Plantation on Bayou Lafourche where he moved with his family and four hundred Negroes. The bishop hoped to set up a model plantation where others could see how Negroes should be treated by a Christian master, and to work out his own plan of christianizing them as a step toward emancipation.[15] He went in this respect beyond the principles expounded in the missionary magazine.

Bishop Polk attempted to become a model master plantation owner and Christian slaveholder in another respect. In Louisiana it was a universal custom of sugar planters to work on Sundays during the grinding season. The cane ripened late in the fall when a heavy frost or a freeze could reduce the sucrose content of the sugar or even destroy the year's crop. It was then, and still is, a necessity to harvest and grind the crop as quickly as possible. The bishop, however, resolved that he and his family would have a proper observance of Sunday by using the day solely for worship, religious instruction, and relaxation.[16] His neighbors urged him to change this practice lest he suffer tragic loss and also make the Negroes on nearby plantations dissatisfied. To this he answered that a Christian man had a duty to God which was higher than any other, and that servants had the same right to rest as he did. Gradually his policy was followed by neighbors and none suffered any serious loss because of it.

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[15] Polk, Bishop and General, 179.

The servants on Leighton Plantation had their own diversions and the Polks always attended these. The largest of these gatherings came at the end of the cane season when a ball was held for the Negroes. A brew of cane juice with intoxicating effects was served, and the bishop exhorted the older servants to set a good example for the younger ones at such times. The bishop would punish offenders when necessary. "Mammy Betsey" was a lifelong member of the Devereux and Polk households and lived for 75 years as a devout member of the Episcopal Church and a trusted counselor and friend of the bishop's family. "Her staunch unchanging devotion and active gratitude to her master's children stand not alone in the experience of many a Southern family. . . ." Polk's attitude towards her was paternalistic, but warm and genuine. She typified a "good Negro."[17]

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[16] Polk, _Bishop and General_, 187.

Each Sunday afternoon the Negroes on the plantation came to the house for religious instruction and for singing. The bishop himself would conduct the worship, baptize, celebrate Holy Communion, and perform the marriage ceremony.[18] This latter point is of interest because, although slave marriages were permitted under the Black Code, they were not usually blessed by a clergyman. It was consistent with the bishop's religion and with his future wish to emancipate his own and other slaves. Polk took great care to preserve the sanctity of family life and celebrated weddings in his own home with bride and groom properly dressed and with a reception. When a couple was found with child before marriage, they were summoned to the house and the marriage performed without fanfare, proper clothes, flowers, candles, or silver. Children were well cared for in a nursery under proper medical care. Younger children and servants unable to do field work were assigned lighter duties in the house or garden.

The bishop conformed rather well to the model he set out for himself and was in most respects the kind of slaveholder that sentimental Southerners like to hear about and like to think was typical. His actions in the diocese were consistent with those on his own plantation because it was his profound belief that the slaves must be elevated and christianized before emancipation. He was, in fact, one of only three Southern bishops who was liberal enough to state this position.[19]

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[17] Polk, Bishop and General, 192.

[18] Ibid., 196.

Bishop Polk had made it clear in his first address to the diocese of Louisiana in convention that the church's mission included the Negro. Bishop Polk in his voluminous writings never referred to the servant class as "slaves," but always as "Negroes," "colored," "laboring class," "the poor," "servants," or some similar term. His avoidance of the word "slave" indicates, perhaps, his reservations about the system. The bishop recognized inequality of the slave institution and exhibited a sensitivity toward slaves by seeking to strengthen them with the gifts of God's grace as compensation for their worldly lacks. He further explained that Jesus Christ had come especially to minister to the poor and they were of special concern to Him. "The poor are found among the laboring classes in all communities; and their claim to our attention and Christian offices here, is greatly strengthened by their peculiar condition of dependence."[20]

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[19] Manross, American Episcopal Church, 290.

[20] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

The fact that slavery was a unique and peculiar circumstance made it a compelling area for Christian work; it promised to be a fruitful field of labor due to the slaves' readiness to hear God's word. "In order however to ensure any great degree of success in this enterprise, we must have the countenance and hearty cooperation of our brethren of the laity."[21] He took great care to avoid the mistake of having the clergy and laity on opposite sides of the fence. Making it a purely clerical effort would have defeated his plan to minister to the Negroes because it was the laity who would make this ministry possible. Polk was pleased to report that he found a willingness on the part of all laymen of his acquaintance to open that door:

> It being distinctly understood and seen, that our purpose is to teach all orders and degrees of men, in the language of one of our formularies, "to do their duty in that state of life, in which it has pleased God to call them." That we are not political crusaders, but simple and guileless teachers of the Gospel which was preached by our Saviour and his Apostles in a region whose social condition was altogether similar to our own. . . .[22]

Clearly the gospel was for all men in whatever class or state of life, but equally clear was Bishop Polk's guarantee to the laity that he accepted these social conditions on the basis that our Lord did in His own earthly life. He knew that he alone could not change the social conditions or abolish the institution of slavery, so he was determined to work within it in perparation for the day when it would change. His mission was not ". . . to dogmatize on the civil relations or rights of individuals" but ". . . to bind the conscience and the affections to the faithful discharge of the duties of those relations."[23] He thus assured the masters that this move was designed to make workers of the slaves by giving them a faith to live by.

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[21] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

[22] Ibid.

Bishop Polk also visualized a class of ministers who could be trained and ordained without the high educational standards required by the Canons for the priesthood.[24] A new canon easing these requirements was proposed and passed in the General Convention of 1844 as a part of the missionary strategy of the Church as it moved westward.[25] This canon provided for reduced standards for deacons who would act as evangelists in missionary areas and among people of moderate intelligence. Had this plan been executed, the Episcopal Church might have become far stronger than it did. Bishop Polk saw an immediate application of the new canon to the slave population in the South and more especially in Louisiana. He felt also that this sort of ministry could apply to ". . . a large number of others in our cities and rural districts of moderate intelligence, and for whose instruction a very high degree of cultivation can in no wise be deemed necessary.[26] A proposal was also seriously offered to change the Book of Common Prayer to fit the needs of plantation Negroes better. However, a number of priests who were working with the Negroes felt that the full liturgical office of the Prayer Book was found ". . . to secure the attention, and to impress the mind, of the slaves" and if any necessary changes were to be made, they felt that appropriate extra liturgical services could be devised.[27]

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[23] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 8.

[24] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 10.

[25] General Convention Journal, 1844, 135.

The first mention of a specific sacramental ministry to Negroes was in the parochial report for Grace Church, St. Francisville, for the year 1839.[28] The rector reported that he had baptized 27 white children and 30 colored children and that he had 21 Negro adults as communicants. Although there is no further mention of Negro ministry as such until after Bishop Polk made his plea for an increased effort on behalf of the slaves, there is every reason to believe that the clergy did minister to them. The bishop's diary records numerous instances of his personal attention to the plantation hands. Furthermore, the statistics reported by the clergy were given in several ways, sometimes noting the white and Negro separately and at other times simply reporting a total figure which included both races.[29] A few illustrations will suffice to demonstrate how the ministry to the Negro increased during the years subsequent to 1843.

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[26] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 9.

[27] Diocesan Journal, 1858, 44.

[28] Diocesan Journal, 1840, 22.

[29] St. James Church, Baton Rouge, Parish Register, L, passim.

In 1844 the Reverend A. H. Lamon, who was rector of the newly-organized St. John's Church in West Baton Rouge, reported a total of 80 communicants, but he held separate services for "the colored people every Sabbath afternoon, at two different places, at each of which 100 or upward attended, and seemed much interested." Bishop Polk visited these Negro congregations the following year, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 37 "persons of color," and reported:

> The interest manifested by this latter portion of the congregation in the solemn services of the Church, as well as their zeal in their half on the part of their masters, who have devolved upon them the responsibility of their spiritual instruction, was of the most gratifying character.[30]

Sacraments were normally given to racially mixed groups. The bishop reported that on May 16, 1843, he administered ". . . baptism to five adults and twenty seven children, seven of whom were colored."[31]

In that same year missionary offerings were instituted as requested by the previous convention. One of these special offerings which appears many times in the records was ". . . for the education of an African child, to be named by Leonidas Polk."[32] This would indicate than an organized movement was afoot in the diocese to care not only for the spiritual needs and education of the Negroes but toward general education as well. The phrase "African child" refers to a slave because "sons of Africa" was one of the phrases Bishop Polk used to avoid the word "slave."

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[30] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 8.

[31] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 19.

[32] Ibid., 20.

Often the success among Negroes was greater than among whites. Elijah Guion reported that twenty-one colored, but only three white persons, were confirmed in Natchitoches.[33] The reason for this was that many parishes were plantation churches. For example, St. Mary's Church, Bayou Goula, drew its members from twelve plantations and families, and the racial makeup of such a structure gave more numbers to the Negro than to the whites.[34] This particular parish priest reported his statistics as either "black" or "white."[35]

Sunday schools were usually set up by many of the clergy, as by Bishop Polk, on a separate basis for the Negro children, but this was not always so. As in sacramental administration, so in instruction the racial makeup of classes was often mixed. It was impractical to have separate classes due to the size of some of the groups, and in most cases the instruction was catechetical and was performed in the Church, hence there was no reason for separation. Where other types of instruction were given, separate classes were set up due to disparity in the background of the children.[36] The clergy found work with the Negroes more productive at times than among the white. The Reverend Spencer Wall resigned his parish in West Feliciana to take charge of a plantation congregation of Negroes near "Thibodeauxville on the Lafourche." There he had a large congregation, Sunday school, and prospects of a church to be erected by voluntary labor.[37]

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[33] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 30.

[34] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 27.

[35] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 20.

Some of the Negroes or their white masters became interested in bringing the church to Africa. By the mid-1840's the slave trade from Africa had long ceased, but the colonization movement of "back to Africa" was underway.[38] Negroes who had become active Episcopalians wanted to bring the Gospel to their brethren in Africa and set up a fund for this purpose.[39] They were probably supporting the mission in Monrovia which began in 1835 under the auspices of James M. Thompson, a Negro lay missionary, and Thomas S. Savage, a clergyman and medical doctor who arrived in Africa in 1838. This mission is still an active unit of the Episcopal Church.

The effect of Christianity upon the Negroes was described by the Reverend J. Sanders, rector of St. John's in

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[36] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 28.

[37] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 19.

[38] Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York, 1960), 20-21.

[39] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 27.

Thibodaux, who reported in 1849 that his congregation consisted of "thirty-two whites and thirty-two colored persons." He also had a separate congregation of Negroes on a large plantation who had been under instruction for two years:

> The change effected in these people is such as greatly to encourage efforts in behalf of their portion of our population. The work is of God--it is to be proved so--by the godly walk and conversation of every one of those confirmed.[40]

The Reverend A. D. McCoy initiated a plantation-type ministry to the Negro people on November 28, 1847, along with his parish and the Female Seminary. In the next four years he baptized 46 white persons and 469 Negroes.[41] He rotated services on alternate Sundays on thirteen plantations and ministered to over 1,300 people.

> On every occasion, with the colored people, the regular evening prayer is read, omitting only the Psalter. The interest they feel and express in the services is greater than I can find words to describe, and continually increases.[42]

McCoy exercised great care in the preparation of the Negroes for Holy Communion. In 1851 he reported that "one hundred and thirty are ready and desirous to be confirmed" and a greater number were under instruction. Since the bishop had been unable to make a visitation to administer the sacrament of confirmation, the priest reported he was going to admit those prepared to Holy Communion before confirmation as provided by the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.

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[40] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 21.

[41] Spirit of Missions (December, 1851), 254.

[42] Ibid., 507.

McCoy ministered to the colored people without "pecuniary compensation" and when he began his work, there were objections from some of the white people. After several years, however, these objections disappeared.[43] McCoy explained why the next year:

> The coloured people maintain their christian integrity. It is most cheering to the heart to witness with what earnestness and delight they uniformly engage in worship, and listen to the Word of Life. When the mind indulges in the contemplation of the influence which our holy religion exerts on them--how it spreads from mind to mind, and is perpetuated for many generations as the chief subject of thought and conversation, the heart exceedingly rejoices at being permitted to scatter the good seed in soil which promises to give such ripe harvests.[44]

Since this diligent priest traveled extensively on horseback to reach the various plantations, he rejoiced at the gift of a buggy, harness, and whip from the congregation of Trinity Church, Newark, New Jersey.[45] With the new vehicle he was able to reach as many as 1,400 people in a Sunday round. When the bishop came for visitation he typically presented ". . . three white persons and one hundred forty-two colored people."

The ministry of McCoy was typical of others throughout the diocese, and in 1853 every priest in the diocese was doing similar work; there were at least 20 such centers of effort, and more could have been established had there been more clergy.[46] It was likewise true that the Negroes so converted in many cases remained Episcopalians, although the great majority drifted later to other denominations with Negro ministers. In the case of the work at Alexandria, Negroes have remained members of St. James Church until the present day.[47]

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[43] Ibid., 508.

[44] Spirit of Missions, June, 1852, 178.

[45] Spirit of Missions, July, 1854, 254.

There is some record of an effort to establish parishes specifically for free Negroes. On January 28, 1855, Bishop Polk met with twenty such families for the purpose of establishing ". . . a regularly organized parish of the Episcopal Church."[48] As a consequence, St. Thomas' Church in New Orleans was organized in accordance with the laws of the state and the canon law of the Church. The Reverend C. H. Williamson was placed in charge of the parish and officers, wardens, and vestrymen were elected. The only name to come down in the records was a "Mr. Jinnings."[49] The parish was fortunate to be allowed the use of the facilities of L'Eglise Francaise on Sunday afternoons. The bishop felt a wider ministry could be exercised to free Negroes:

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[46] General Convention Journal, 1858, 270.

[47] St. James Church, Alexandria, Parish Records, passim.

[48] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 22.

[49] Herman C. Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888 (New Orleans, 1888), 78.

> There is a class of persons which is very numerous in the City of New Orleans, and highly intelligent, and for which no such provision has been made for their spiritual instruction and consolation, as is demanded by their intelligence in all points agreeable to them, it is believed the ministrations they are now enjoying, and the modes of worship indicated and provided by the church, very fully meets this want, and is not only highly acceptable, but will prove, under God, abidingly instructive and profitable to them.[50]

Bishop Polk made personal visits to the plantation groups even as he did to parish churches. In 1855 he requested that the clergy give the fullest possible attention to the Negroes, pointing out that there were many uninstructed who would gladly hear the gospel if some of the clergy would make their services more available and more laity would request these services for their servants. Typical of these visits and indicative of Polk's attitude is one made to a plantation near St. Francisville following a sojourn at Grace Church:

> . . . I visited a congregation of colored people on the estate of Mrs. Ira Smith. . . . These people have been in training for some time . . . and have made gratifying proficiency in the knowledge of the elements of the Gospel. His instructions are mainly cathechetical; and I was assured by their mistress, that in their manifestly improved moral and religious deportment, she had reason to believe in the judiciousness, as well as the Scriptural characters of the instruction imparted.[51]

The bishop further commented that his strong desire was that others would follow the example of this lady by opening the door for regular instruction of all the slaves. He felt that this was an urgent need for the enlightenment of the slaves and also as a safeguard "from the extravagances and excesses of a wild and blind fanaticism" which was coming to them from other sources.[52] The worship and instruction conducted for servants on the plantation were usually held in the homes of the plantation owners: sometimes they took place in such places as the sugar houses, and in some cases regular houses of worship were constructed.[53]

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[50] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 22.

[51] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 21.

As national tension rose over the slavery issue, and was aggravated by such events as Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, and later incidents in "bleeding Kansas," and the appearance of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Bishop Polk called even closer attention to the Negroes in Louisiana. In 1855 he asked that every priest in the diocese make a specific report on his work among the Negroes. The committee of convention of that year was able to report that in 1855 the clergy were ministering to a total of 3,600 Negro Episcopalians on 31 plantations located in the area south of Alexandria.[54] This indicated that many plantations were without a priestly ministry, and the bishop pleaded for more diligence in this work, but the parochial reports listed only 1,173 adult members of the Church in the parishes and many of those are listed as colored.[55] This would indicate a far greater number of Negro Episcopalians in Louisiana than white members in that period.

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[52] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 22.

[53] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 53.

[54] Ibid., 32.

[55] Ibid., 6-55.

By 1858 Bishop Polk stated that of the 37 clergymen ministering in Louisiana, almost all of them had services for Negroes.

> Still, however, there is an immense field of usefulness yet unoccupied among these sons of Africa around us; and fields, too, for the occupation of which, by the Church, both the protectors and the Church are deeply responsible to God.[56]

That convention responded to the bishop's message with a resolution calling upon all masters to have the privilege of religious instruction and services extended to all slaves.[57] This same convention took under serious consideration the reordering of the liturgy especially for slave congregations. This was not done,but the bishop felt that some special effort to educate the slave population was necessary and set out "to prepare the Manual of Decotion, or rather indicate some systematic mode of instruction, for the slave population of the Diocese. . . ." Polk remarked that the Book of Common Prayer could and should be used for this purpose as well but it needed a "judicious method" of use with the Negroes.[58]

The records for the years immediately preceding the Civil War reveal that the Episcopal Church in Louisiana was ministering to whites and Negroes in almost every organized parish in the diocese, as well as conducting special services for the plantation hands in fifty places in the state.[59] In most cases they shared in the same services, being baptized, confirmed and receiving Holy Communion together. This relationship was almost completely destroyed by the Civil War.

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[56] Diocesan Journal, 1858, 1, 26.

[57] Ibid., 38.

[58] Diocesan Journal, 1859, 24.

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[59] Diocesan Journals, 1855-1861, passim.

# CHAPTER XV

## ORGANIZATION OF THE DIOCESE, 1838-1861

There are three basic systems of polity or church government by which authority is recognized and exercised in the organized church. The first is "congregational," which acknowledges the local congregation as the ultimate authority under God; the second is "presbyterian" and looks to the presbyters in session as the authoritative body. The third, the "episcopal," recognizes bishops as successors of the Apostles and as the center of authority. The Episcopal Church, as its name indicates, is governed basically by bishops. In the bishop, Episcopalians see the living successor of the Apostles and look to him as the center of church life. Some recognition is given also to the congregational principle in that local parishes have certain autonomous rights. Similarly, presbyterian polity is incorporated to the extent that the priests as a body, and as individuals have rights and exercise authority in specific areas. But these elements are incorporated within a basically episcopal system with a diocese under a bishop.

Thus when the diocese came into being in Louisiana in 1838, and Bishop Polk began exercising authority on a part-time basis and in 1842 on a full-time basis, in a sense, a new unit of the Anglican Church was created, but it was not born with all of those elements typical of a diocese of the Church Catholic. There were various elements of diocesan life that took nearly twenty years to develop in Louisiana. In each case these developments grew out of the activities of the bishop in his missionary capacity and out of the resolutions of the convention as the corporate gathering of the diocesan family.

In 1838 the Convention approved a constitution drafted by the Reverend R. H. Ranney and the Honorable Thomas Butler.[1] This was a fairly simple structure which lasted until 1848 when a committee under the noted scholar and rector of Christ Church, New Orleans, the Reverend Dr. Francis L. Hawks, was appointed to revise it.[2] This committee worked on a new draft for two years, and in 1852, the new constitution was passed by the convention.[3]

The Constitution of the Diocese of Louisiana is unique in one respect: it was not based on any model from another diocese, but was written _de novo_ for the occasion.[4] It provided for the following features:

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[1] _Journal of the Proceedings of a Convention of the Clergy and Churches, in the State of Louisiana_, Held in Christ Church, New Orleans, For the purpose of organizing said Churches into an independent Diocese, April, 1838, 5. Hereinafter cited as _Diocesan Journal_.

[2] _Diocesan Journal_, 1848, 36.

[3] _Diocesan Journal_, 1852, 17.

[4] Herman C. Duncan, _The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888_ (New Orleans, 1888), 21.

1. "The Church in Louisiana" was to be the official name and it acknowledged the constitution of the Episcopal Church and acceded to that authority.

2. An annual convention was appointed to meet on the third Wednesday in January. Offices of the convention included: the bishop as *ex officio* president and a secretary who was also to act as *ex officio* treasurer and whose accounts were to be checked annually. The bishop was given authority to call special conventions "when, in his opinion, the good of the Church shall require it."

3. The Convention was to be composed of both clergy and laity. All priests with six months' residency in the diocese were to be seated at convention. Parishes with less than fifty families were given three lay delegates and those with over fifty were given five. In each case the delegates were to be chosen by the vestry. Two-thirds of all clergy and laity constituted a quorum for conducting business.

4. Unless specifically provided otherwise, the clergy and laity deliberated in one body and in case of a tie vote, the bishop cast the deciding ballot.

5. A Standing Committee of three priests and three laymen was to be selected annually. This group would act with the bishop on canonical matters and for him in his absence.

6. The election of a bishop provided a four-week notice to be given by the Standing Committee and for the clergy and laity to vote separately. The clergy were to choose a priest for the office of bishop, the choice to be approved.

7. Deputies to General Convention were elected for three years. Vacancies caused by death or removal from the diocese would be filled by the bishop, or, in his absence, by the president of the Standing Committee.

8. Changes in the constitution required action at two successive annual conventions.[5]

The constitution was amended from time to time but most of these changes were minor and can be briefly summarized. The fact of canonical union with the National Church has never been amended, but Bishop Polk's action in January-February, 1861, had the effect of suspending diocesan allegiance to the General Convention.[6]

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[5] *Diocesan Journal*, 1838, 5-6.

Although Article II provided in 1843 that each convention fix the time and place of the next meeting, which gave the meeting schedule more flexibility and altered the time of meeting, returning it to the January date.[7] Article II separated the offices of secretary and treasurer.[8] Article III was changed in 1846 to allow members from one-half the parishes to serve as a quorum instead of two-thirds.[9]

In 1852 membership of the Standing Committee was specifically limited to those laymen who were confirmed members of the Church. The Standing Committee was also given the authority to fill vacancies in the membership, and provision was made for the organization and meetings of this important body.[10] This same reforming convention of 1852 altered from four to six weeks the notice for electing the bishop and permitted the election of a bishop by a simple majority if two-thirds of the parishes were represented;

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[6] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 46.

[7] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 49.

[8] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 16.

[9] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 23.

[10] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 16.

otherwise a two-thirds vote of those present.[11] Finally, the 1852 Convention made it possible to amend the constitution in one assembly rather than two.[12]

The diocesan constitution provided a basic structure and was not subject to frequent change. Canons, on the other hand, determine how this system functions and enable it to meet changing situations. The diocese received its first code of canons in 1839, presented by the president of the Standing Committee, Lucius C. Duncan.[13] Those canons accepted the general Catholic canons and specifically those of the General Convention.

There were only six canons provided in the original corpus accepted by the diocesan convention of 1839. Canon I provided an orderly procedure for organization of new parishes, since this was the largest task of the young diocese. "The friends of the church" were to gather and elect two wardens, five vestrymen and a Parish Clerk. The canons did not specify that the bishop was to be present at such a gathering, but his diary indicates that he was in almost every case present, and that the meetings were called either by him or because he was present.[14] New parishes to be admitted to the convention had to pass specific resolutions declaring their allegiance to the constitution and canons of the

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[11] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 16. [12] Ibid.

[13] Diocesan Journal, 1839, 11.

[14] Diocesan Journals, 1842-1858, passim.

Episcopal Church and the Church in Louisiana.[15] Canon II provided for parish meetings on Easter Monday when parish officers would be elected. Other meetings would be called in case of "manifest expediency." Voting at such meetings was not apparently limited to communicants but to "all persons who own or hire a pew, or who contribute annually to the support of the ministry."[16]

A convention Fund was established by Canon III for the purpose of paying the expenses of the convention and printing the journals. An amount of one per centum of the clergyman's salary or at least ten dollars from each parish was to be administered by the Standing Committee.[17] The keeping of careful records had been a tradition of the American church, as well as of the Church of England back to Apostolic days. To this end, Canon IV required (in accordance with the national canons) that each priest or senior warden keep a register of all official and sacramental acts in a permanent register. It was required also that reports of these acts and other pertinent information on the state of parish life be submitted to the convention annually. These parish registers and reports provided in journals are a rich source of information for the historian, but had the canons not made such provision there would have been no such records. The organization and officers of the Standing

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[15] Diocesan Journal, 1839, 11.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 12.

Committee were specified in Canon V. The final canon provided that each convention was to begin with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist and a sermon.[18]

Unlike the constitution, the canons of the diocese frequently have been amended, and increased in number. In the ante-bellum period these changes were not extensive. In 1848, the canon on new parishes was amended to require that the parish be incorporated under civil law, as well as canon law.[19] Since a parish could own property, sue and be sued, it was necessary to make it a corporate body under the laws of Louisiana. Later additions to this canon recognized the bishop as the chief missionary and required that he take the initiative in parochial organization. It provided also that the priest be a member of the parish vestry and that each parish include the act of conformity to Catholic doctrine, polity, worship, and discipline in its civil charter, and that it be self supporting.[20]

The committee appointed in 1848 to revise the constitution was similarly instructed to propose canonical change as well.[21] This convention revised the canon on the Convention Fund by withholding journals from parishes which had not paid their assessments. The problem of nonpayment of assessments has continued in a small degree to the present day. In order to avoid newcomers in a community taking over a parish, a year's residence was required for voting privilege at most meetings. Time has proven the wisdom of such provision. In recent years the period has been reduced to six months due to the mobility of our population.

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[18] Diocesan Journal, 1839, 12.

[19] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 15.

[20] Duncan, The Diocese of Louisiana, 23.

[21] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 15.

In 1852 the convention approved the suggestion of the committee that canonical provision for the Standing Committee become a part of the constitution because it was a basic part of the diocesan structure.[22] Three completely new canons were accepted in 1852: one outlined in detail the duties of parish wardens and vestrymen, a second instructed the bishop to prepare a canonical list of clergymen resident in the diocese for roll call at convention, the third outlined procedure for ecclesiastical trial of clergymen other than bishops.[23]

The convention itself is the primary authoritative diocesan group which develops under the guidance of bishops. The convention of 1843 appointed a committee to write a set of Rules of Order for the conduct of the convention in 1844.[24] The rules reported by the committee in 1844 remained essentially the same until 1886, at which time they were made standing regulations. The bishop, as president of the convention, presides and has all the usual powers of a presiding officer. The first order of business was to elect a secretary, after which election the secretary called the roll of clergy and laity from their credential certificates. After the secretary certified that a quorum was present, the bishop declared the convention duly organized and proceeded with business.

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[22] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 16.

[23] Ibid., 17.

[24] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 3.

On the first day of convention the bishop or his representative celebrated the Eucharist, but on other days he could use Morning Prayer. Each day (excluding the opening day) the first order of business was to read and correct the minutes from the preceding day and make changes in the membership of the convention. Reports, motions, and resolutions were received according to a calendar established for that purpose. The bishop gave an annual address, usually early in the session. Every member of the house was expected to be present to vote when a question was posed from the chair, unless he had been excused by the chair. The procedures regarding motions, ballots, and voting were carefully spelled out and followed the general canons of parliamentary procedure with two special additions. One of these was that a vote by orders could be demanded by any five members of the house; the other was that no person could speak more than twice on any given matter.[25]

On the diocesan level the greatest amount of work was carried out by committees. The Standing Committee, consisting of three clergymen and three laymen, was the primary committee. Its structure was designed to give the priest and lay orders a share in diocesan authority with the bishop, and is a good illustration of how the three types of polity are mixed in the Episcopal Church. Its function varies depending on the bishop, but can range from the approval of a bishop's consecration for another diocese to such matters as debts and property titles of parishes in Louisiana.

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[25] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 4.

The "Delegates to General Convention" are considered a committee of the diocese in that time period.[26] Their function was to represent the diocese in the House of Deputies of the General Convention, and four priests and four laymen were sent to this mixed house of clergy and laity. Although these deputies were sent to represent the diocese, each man was free to vote on a particular issue as he saw fit. On special occasions a deputation could be "instructed" by the diocesan convention how to vote a particular issue. The deputies were usually elected for three years and attended regular and special conventions during this period. They were also responsible for reporting to the diocesan convention, or to parishes when so requested, on the decisions of the General Convention.

The "Diocesan Missionary Committee" in Louisiana grew out of Bishop Polk's request in 1843 for such a committee.[27] It was composed of three priests and three laymen with the bishop, its ex officio head, as chief missionary of the diocese. Its function was clearly outlined by the bishop as the group which would assist him in the administration of missionary funds, in selection of priests, and in promoting the missionary spirit in the diocese.[28] The committee would also assist in establishing new parishes and in aiding them in the early stages.

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[26] *Diocesan Journal*, 1847, 30.

The "Committee on Education" was appointed by the bishop, who was chairman, and consisted of five members whose aim was ". . . to consider, mature, and report a plan for the establishment and protection of . . . seminaries. . . ."[29] The bishop considered the work of conducting schools a major part of the missionary task in the diocese and devoted a considerable amount of his time, energy, and resources to it.

Various financial committees were created on the diocesan level in the 1840's, which brought another dimension to the evolving structure. Administration was handled by the office of the bishop and the Standing Committee in connection with the national church through the bishop and deputies to convention. The diocesan program was developed by the committees on missions and education. Finally, the financial backing for the programs was enclosed into a financial structure for the diocese.

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[27] Diocesan Journal, 1843, 9-10.

[28] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 8.

[29] Ibid., 23.

The first diocesan fund to evolve was the mission fund which grew out of the convention at St. Francisville in 1843.[30] The only fund which existed prior to this was the convention fund established by the constitution. Whereas this sum was an assessment, on the other hand the missionary fund was an offering of the people which was requested as a thank offering. These offerings were listed in the diocesan journals under parochial reports and the secretary made an accounting of them in his capacity as treasurer.

Retired or infirm clergymen were the subject of a report in 1845, when the "Committee on Superannuated Clergymen" sought to establish a fund for them and for widows and children of deceased clergymen. It was suggested that each clergyman take a special offering on Christmas Day to endow such a fund.[31]

In the same year a fund called the "Episcopal Fund" was established to be used for the support of the bishop and his office. Until this time Bishop Polk had supported himself with his personal wealth and his plantation on Bayou Lafourche. He was still doing so at the time this fund was established, but the combination of cholera, floods, and storms took such a toll of life and property that he was forced to sell his holdings, move to New Orleans, and accept the rectorship of Trinity Church for his personal support on January 1, 1855.[32]

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[30] _Diocesan Journal_, 1843, 14.

[31] _Diocesan Journal_, 1845, 18.

The fund established for the support of the episcopate was inadequate to the needs of a bishop. The report of 1846 indicates that a total of $5.00 from one parish had been deposited into this account perhaps on the premise that their bishop was supporting himself.[33] Nonetheless, a committee was appointed "to obtain incorporation for trust funds" because larger donations of money, as well as grants of land and other properties, were expected to come into the diocesan treasury for this purpose.[34]

The various diocesan financial needs grew one after the other and the idea of combining the money for them into a trust fund found its genesis in the convention of 1845. To this end, a three-point resolution was passed by this body which instructed: the clergy were to procure annual contributions, the wardens to open books in each parish to obtain money, land or other property, and a committee to apply to the state legislature for incorporation.[35] It was moved further that a representation of the diocese travel from parish to parish for the purpose of collecting such funds.[36]

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[32] Joseph H. Parks, General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A. (Baton Rouge, 1962), 112-13.

[33] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 22.

[34] Ibid., 30.

[35] Diocesan Journal, 1845, 18-19.

[36] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 22.

In 1846, the committee, composed of Thomas Butler, George S. Lacey, and John L. Lovell, three laymen, presented a draft of a proposed legislative act for the establishment of the "Trustees of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Louisiana."[37] Its purpose was to set up a legal corporation to hold trust funds for the diocese for specific ecclesiastical objectives and to administer such funds. The purposes listed included the following: "raising funds for the support of the Bishop of this State; to aid superannuated ministers, their widows and children; to aid and assist missionaries of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this State; and to establish and support schools and colleges. . . ."[38] The act proposed to incorporate the trustees under civil law to administer funds for those specific purposes. The trustees were to be elected annually and were to serve until such time as their successors took office. They were to be instructed by the convention on the manner of disposing of securities with the principal to be managed in such a manner that the revenue would not exceed one hundred thousand dollars.[39]

The committee of three reported that the Louisiana Constitution of 1845 forbade the enactment of special laws in favor of corporations but did provide general laws of incorporation. They reported further that the legislature was then in session and requested of the convention consent for an amendment to canon law to enable the Church "to secure permanent and safe investment of all funds for the objects of this Church" and permit the proposed corporate body.

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[37] Diocesan Journal, 1846, 12-22.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 21.

It was two years before the Committee on Corporations reported that the legislature of the State of Louisiana under its new constitution had passed on April 30, 1847, a general law of incorporation which would allow the Church to set up the trustees of a fund for charitable or other purposes.[40]

Meanwhile the funds proposed for the various diocesan objects were beginning to grow. The episcopal endowment had an income of $1,520 for 1847, compared with the first year's gift of $5.00.[41] Other funds were growing as well and the need for closer supervision was becoming imperative. The convention in 1850 appointed J. L. Lobdell and L. C. Duncan "to digest and prepare such acts under said general laws as may be found necessary to accomplish . . ." the objects of a trust fund.[42]

The trust was incorporated in 1853 and was known as the "Protestant Episcopal Association," and was to minister funds.[43] The interest was to be used for the annual salary of the bishop, or bishops, of the diocese, superannuated clergymen, widows and orphans of clergymen, missions and schools. This expanded somewhat the original aims of the fund as outlined in 1846; and the board of directors was authorized to administer all funds rather than having a separate board for each fund as proposed earlier. This board was to be chosen annually by the convention, and the association was to hold no more than three hundred thousand dollars in trust rather than the limited revenue of one hundred thousand as formerly suggested. Concerning schools supported by the income from this fund, the directors reserved to themselves the power to prescribe discipline, establish plans of education, appoint teachers, and make by-laws.

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[40] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 11.

[41] Diocesan Journal, 1850, 12.

[42] Ibid., 27.

[43] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 31-35.

This proposed charter was approved and signed by the members of the convention and the Protestant Episcopal Association was incorporated on April 15, 1853.[44] Beginning in 1854, various persons were named each year to act as a committee to solicit funds for this trust, and by 1860, $32,620 had been subscribed and partially paid for the support of the episcopate. Funds also began to come in for the other objects of the fund to the trustees who administered the income from that until the present time.

In all of the committees, associations, trust and conventions of the diocese, the guiding hand was always that of

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[44] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 40.

Leonidas Polk. The structure of diocesan life which evolved during his episcopate was sound and has continued in its basic form to the present. He was careful to develop institutions which conformed in every respect to those which had emerged during the centuries of Church life from the Apostles' time. He was able to do this because he understood clearly the powers and responsibilities of the office of bishop.

As presiding officer of the convention, he supervised with care the development of appropriate committees and used his power of appointment to have the proper persons serve on them. In the convention he used the required "Bishop's Report" both as a means of reviewing his official acts and actions of the year past, and as a means of informing the convention of pressing needs which only he could see and point out. It was he who suggested the missionary program, the school system, and the procurement of finances to support them; and he appointed the committees which could carry out these proposals.

Bishop Polk visited the parishes to inform rectors, wardens, vestrymen, and people of diocesan life and of larger membership in the national church with its Catholic heritage. Through the canons he exercised specific authority over the clergy, which he used to persuade them gently but firmly to get their jobs done well. The annual reports submitted to the bishop and convention were printed.

In the actual functioning of the diocese the bishop was the center about which diocesan life developed. He interpreted doctrine, and he outlined to the diocese on several occasions his views on this matter, discipline, and worship. In the 1840's and 1850's the Episcopal Church was going through a major crisis in theology with the advent of the Oxford Movement, and Bishop Polk made his doctrinal position as a Catholic bishop crystal clear.[45]

The bishop and the convention made a response to the "Muhlenberg Memorial." (An open letter to the bishops of the Episcopal Church assembled in Philadelphia, on October 18, 1853, written by the Reverend W. S. Muhlenberg but also signed by a number of other clergy.)[46] This letter was an appeal to the bishops to take some action and address themselves to the divided state of Christianity in the United States and the lack of harmony in the Episcopal Church. The signers were moved to do this by ". . . the great moral and social necessities of the day," believing that a strong church would exert more influence in the social and political areas. Large numbers of Americans had no form of

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[45] Diocesan Journal, 1842, 31.

[46] Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Assembled in a General Convention, Held in Trinity Church and St. John's Chapel, in the City of New York, From October 5th to October 20th, Inclusive, in the Year of our Lord 1853 (Philadelphia, 1854), 181. Hereinafter cited as General Convention Journal.

Christianity and the existing tightly structured ecclesiastical system and inflexible mode of public worship made it difficult to appeal to wide groups in society. The actual Sunday worship of an Episcopal Church required the use of what is now three separate services--much of which had little appeal to the unchurched populace.

Muhlenberg and the other signers also suggested a first step toward the reunion of Christendom

> . . . who, though differing in name, yet hold to one Faith, the one Lord, and the one Baptism, and who need only such a bond to be drawn together in closer and more primitive fellowship as is here believed to be the peculiar province and high privilege of your venerable body as a College of Catholic and Apostolic Bishops as such.[47]

They were plainly suggesting that Christians reunite on the Apostolic model, and in so doing they were one hundred years ahead of their time as this suggestion has been adopted in the 1960's by most major Christian churches. Their memorial was referred to a Commission of bishops who in turn wrote to the various dioceses asking for suggestions regarding the modes of worship being used and the functioning of the episcopal system of government as it existed in the church at that time.[48]

In Louisiana, the Reverend Chauncey Colton submitted a preamble and resolution which was seconded by former

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[47] General Convention Journal, 1853, 182.

[48] Ibid., 216.

Governor Henry Johnson and was adopted by the diocesan convention.[49] This motion eloquently set before the Louisiana convention the Commission of Bishops' inquiry regarding public worship. It declared that the basic mission of the Church was to preach the Gospel to all nations and that the liturgy was a proclamation of the gospel. The Prayer Book accepted and set forth the substance of the faith, but it was never committed to the particular forms contained. It reaffirmed Catholic and cardinal principle that particular forms of liturgy may for good reason be altered.

The social conditions of the day demanded a more flexible ecclesiastical system and form of worship than then was in use. The Diocese of Louisiana, "loyal alike to its Apostolic truth and order and the divine mission of Christianity," was anxious to see some changes. Also Louisiana, because "of the importance and influence of her great commercial mart, New Orleans; from her geographical position and extent of territory; and the diversity of races and faiths of her population . . ." required that those questions asked by the bishops be given the most "dispassionate and candid consideration."[50] The convention appointed the bishop, three priests, and three laymen to draft a reply.

It is interesting to note that reform movements in the church often take place at a time when grave social and political issues are at stake. The reaction of the church in such times is to purify its own life in order to heal the wounds of society. At that time the issue of slavery was paramount and this situation was complicated in Louisiana by epidemics of disease, which took the lives of many slaves. Hence a strong and positive reply was made by the committee, which consisted of the Reverend Fathers Leacock, Goodrich, and Guin, John L. Lobdell, G. B. Duncan, and Governor Henry Johnson, with Bishop Polk as chairman.[51] These men reported that the day had arrived for a response to social conditions by changing the church's structure and forms. Specific liturgical alterations suggested by the committee were as follows: (a) allowing the Eucharist to be celebrated without Morning Prayer or the Litany; (b) adopting the lessons to the seasons; (c) providing more prayers and services for special occasions; (d) allowing greater discretion of hymns; (e) holding special missionary services; (f) granting greater liberty to particular bishops in adapting to local needs; and (g) rearranging the Psalter.[52] Thus was Bishop Polk able to get support from his convention for change in the most important Episcopal Church heritage, the Book of Common Prayer, about which churchmen are most conservative. Changes did not come, however, until 1892.

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[49] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 36-38.

[50] Ibid., 37.

As the link between the diocese and the national church organization, Bishop Polk spent a considerable amount of time on national Church business. He attended meetings of the House of Bishops, of special committees to which he was assigned by the House, and of the board of the seminary in New York of which he was a trustee. In each case he would interpret the actions of these groups to the diocese through his convention address. He also sought "to foster and cherish a feeling of sympathy and unity between the American and English branches of the Reformed Catholic Church, with a view to strengthening their hearts and hands against a common enemy, and for devising means for spreading more efficiently the doctrines and usages of the Primitive Church."[53] He always reminded his diocese of its apostolic roots while urging upon them the mission of sharing the faith with all unchurched people.

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[51] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 36.

[52] Ibid., 35.

Further contact with the mother Church of England came when Bishop Polk received a letter from the Bishop of London asking for aid to members of the English Church who had settled in the state.[54] The letter proposed that Bishop Polk form a chapter of the "Anglo-American Emigrants' Society" to assist Anglicans coming to Louisiana in finding membership in a local parish. This relationship with another branch of the Anglican Communion was healthy for the diocese in every way. It made local Episcopalians feel part of the universal Church, and it also brought trained churchmen into the diocese.

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[53] Diocesan Journal, 1854, 24.

[54] C. J. London (Bishop of London), London, England, to Leonidas Polk, September 1, 1855, in Diocesan Journal, 1856, 69.

The last four years of Polk's episcopate in Louisiana were spent in trips throughout the diocese and outside it on behalf of an institute of higher learning. This cause, to which he was so devoted, resulted in one of his most outstanding achievements as bishop of Louisiana: the interdiocesan effort among Southern dioceses which culminated in the founding of the University of the South at Sewanee.

# CHAPTER XVI

## PAROCHIAL GROWTH, 1847-1860

After five years of the full-time episcopal supervision under Leonidas Polk, the Diocese of Louisiana could report significant progress to the General Convention of 1847.[1] The three-year period from 1844 to 1847 had produced the most rapid increase of clergy and communicants in the young diocese's history. After a uphill struggle against prejudice, the Episcopal Church was accepted and respected in both the Southern and Northern areas of the state. At that time there were fourteen parishes in union with the convention, and eight missionary stations which were served by the bishop and nineteen other clergymen. Two priests gave their full time to the work of education, and three native sons were studying for the priesthood.

Statistically, the diocese was not large, containing only 724 communicants; however, this figure did not include the growing number of Negroes who were trained and confirmed members of the Church. The report to General Convention listed 623 children as Sunday school pupils, 71 teachers, and $5,253.00 total contributions for all purposes.[2] The monies for the support of parishes were not listed, and the figure above represents the amount given by them to the church for missions, diocesan support, and other purposes.

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[1] Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Assembled in a General Convention, Held in St. John's Chapel, in the City of New York, From October 6th to October 28th, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1847 (New York, 1847), 189. Hereinafter cited as General Convention Journal.

The three unique missions reported by the diocese were: the chapel for seamen in New Orleans, worship services in the French language, and the parochial schools. These were special needs and the church has always sought to make the gospel relevant to such situations.

But the backbone of the church has been from the sixth century the gathering of families into worshiping and working units, called parishes, under priests. Prior to 500 A.D. the whole church in an area was directly under the bishop, but as it extended in the cities and from the cities to the rural areas, the small units under priests developed as parishes.[3] The parish church, with its people, buildings, services, projects, educational programs, and missionary efforts, has been and continues to be the primary working unit of the church. Therefore, it was to the parish that Bishop Polk gave his primary attention, and it was through the instrument of the bishop's office that parishes were established, provided with clergy, given programs, and brought to maturity as self-sustaining units. Although the bishop did give increasing attention to educational projects and general church projects, he also gave pastoral oversight to his diocese's seeking out new areas for parochial development.

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[2] General Convention Journal, 1847, 189.

[3] Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York, 1952), 166.

In 1847 four new parishes were founded, one of which (Trinity of New Orleans) was to have a special relationship to the bishop and was to grow into the largest parish in the diocese. This development was largely due to the constant persistence of Bishop Polk in the area of missionary expansion. In that year, he appealed to the diocese stressing "the importance of increasing the amount of our contributions for diocesan missions."[4] He commended churchmen in New Orleans for their good work in the City Missionary Society but urged "every member of the diocese, whether in city or country," to engage himself and his resources in the task of establishing new parishes. The laity were appealed to especially, for without their resources the job could not be done. The laity were urged to be particularly interested in home missions because such missions were close at hand and, therefore, tangible in a sense that distant missions were not. In addition, this was the only way to strengthen the new diocese.

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[4] _Journal of the Ninth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church_ in Louisiana: Held in The Church of the Annunciation and Christ Church, New Orleans, on Wednesday, Fourteenth, Thursday, Fifteenth, and Friday, Sixteenth Days of April, A.D. 1847 (New Orleans, 1847), 24. Hereinafter cited as _Diocesan Journal_.

Louisiana's population grew from 18,000 in 1812 to 168,000 in 1860, and small cities formed in a number of areas throughout the state. Population also continued to increase on the plantations which usually were located on rivers and bayous, both because of the fertility of the soil near rivers from overflow years and also because waterways were the primary means of transportation. Similarly, population spread to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain across the lake from New Orleans. This land was higher than New Orleans, had an abundant water supply. It was cooler, and was thought to be more healthful in the hot season and during epidemics. Many New Orleanians lived there part of the year, or retired there, and some lived there year round. One such community in this area was the town of Covington where the Reverend Wiley Peck began the work of starting an Episcopal church in 1846.[5] Peck had come from Tennessee as had others who knew Bishop Polk in that diocese. Christ Church was the name given to that parish, which was conceived and erected by a few individuals "in moderate circumstances of life" who depended for resources of time, money, and manpower on themselves alone. Less than twelve months after work was begun, the church was completed and consecrated by the bishop, who described it as ". . . one of the neatest country churches belonging to the diocese. . . ."[6] The speed with which that building was constructed is even more significant when one realizes that a rectory was also built and that both buildings were free of debt. The bishop was gladdened by this latter fact since much of his time and energy were consumed in financial matters, and a new parish with no debt was an example he hoped would be emulated many times over in the diocese.

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[5] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 18.

The church was consecrated April 11, 1847, and the parish was admitted to union with the diocese on April 14, 1847.[7] In that same year, there was an epidemic of yellow fever in the New Orleans area, including Covington. Peck, in devoting himself to the sick and dying in his parish, contracted the disease himself and died.[8] "He was of a warm and affectionate disposition, and his devotion to his duty enshrined his memory in the hearts of his people."[9]

Covington remained without a priest until January 15, 1848, when the Reverend S. J. Lynd assumed the rectorship. He began work in the nearby communities of Mandeville and Louisburg, intending to establish separate parishes there.[10] There were brief efforts to do this but the main work continued at Covington as it does to the present.

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[6] _Diocesan Journal_, 1847, 22. [7] _Ibid_., 7.

[8] _Diocesan Journal_, 1848, 29.

[9] Herman C. Duncan, _The Diocese of Louisiana . . . 1805-1888_ (New Orleans, 1888), 142.

[10] _Diocesan Journal_, 1848, 29.

Meanwhile, the prosperous "American" population of New Orleans was building a residential section upriver in the city of Lafayette (now the New Orleans "Garden District"). In 1847 this area was growing rapidly and was occupied by only two church groups: Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. It was a prime area for expansion of the Episcopal Church because the church had a special appeal to the social class of persons who were moving there. The Reverend R. H. Ranney (the peripatetic priest whose name is associated with the beginning of a number of Louisiana churches) began officiating in Lafayette in March of 1847.[11] Using a small room on Washington Avenue at the corner of Laurel Street, he began work with six communicants, a group so tiny that he felt he could not ask for an offering. He also began a Sunday school with eighteen children present and baptized the children of several families.

Ranney resigned to begin a new work at Balize, Louisiana, and was succeeded by Charles P. Clark, a lay reader and former Methodist minister who had been ministering to a group of French Protestants in a private residence on Prytania Street.[12] After receiving his lay reader's license on June 25, 1847, Clark sought to raise funds for the purchase of property for a church among the thirty families then associated with the mission.[13] His efforts were successful and three lots were purchased in July with a down payment of $400.00.

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[11] Diocesan Journal, 1847, 17.

[12] Hand written copy of the Records of Trinity Parish, New Orleans, dated 1886, in possession of author.

"The Church of the Holy Trinity" was incorporated under civil law and the property title was transferred to the new vestry which consisted of: William M. Goodrich (a brother of Dr. Goodrich of St. Paul's), senior warden, Ferdinand Rodenwald, junior warden, and Charles P. Clark, Augustus S. Phelps, John F. Thorpe, Washington W. Vaught, and Daniel S. Dowees. The two wardens were prominently connected with other New Orleans parishes. The act of incorporation was given approval by Governor Isaac Johnson and was placed in the archives on July 10, 1847, by Charles Gayarré, Secretary of State.[14] Clark's efforts were interrupted in the summer by a "desolating epidemic" of yellow fever when he and his family became infected. All were spared, however, and he remained at his post, serving also as lay reader at Christ Church for four months during the absence of Dr. L. Hawkes.[15] On November 5, a contract was let for a chapel 25 feet by 55 feet which would be designed as an appendage to a larger church in the future. It seated 250 persons, contained a vestry room and a gallery for a choir, and was beautified by an iron fence and landscaping.

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[13] _Diocesan Journal_, 1848, 23.

[14] _Records of Trinity Parish_, New Orleans.

[15] _Diocesan Journal_, 1848, 23-24.

Having completed his examinations, Clark was ordained deacon on January 2, 1848, and ordained to the priesthood on Easter Sunday. This was the first confirmation, the first ordination, and the first Eucharistic celebration in the city of Lafayette according to the Anglican rite, all of which were performed in the new chapel.[16] The new congregation, with the help of friends, had raised $3,200.00 toward the payment of the chapel. Clark had not only Sunday services, but during Lent he had Wednesday and Friday liturgies as well, and during Passiontide he conducted daily worship, and all with a large attendance. Although Trinity was listed as a mission, the rector predicted that it would occupy a "commanding position," and it became a parish on May 3, 1848.[17]

The early history of Holy Trinity Church was not indicative of its later development, for soon afterwards the work lagged and funds were insufficient to support the priest. As more than twenty families had moved from the parish, the rector resigned May 6, 1850.[18] The vestry clerk, in notifying the bishop of Clark's departure, reported that only half of the pews were rented but noted that there were "enough Episcopal families living near the Church to fill it twice as large, if they could be induced to attend."[19]

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[16] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 24.

[17] Ibid., 7.

[18] Diocesan Journal, 1850, 30.

[19] Records of Trinity Parish, New Orleans.

So desperate were the finances that an attempt was made to rent the chapel for a school but without success.

To this depressing situation Bishop Polk sent Alexander Dobb, who visited the parish on November 24, 1850, and took charge as rector. He reported he believed ". . . that God has set before him an open door of usefulness, and to trust that with health and divine blessing he may be enabled to enter it. . . ."[20] The real life of the parish began with Father Dobb, and much of its later success was due to his personality:

> . . . he drew all men to him--a man of abounding faith he took no thought of how his wants were to be supplied, but litterally (sic) looked to God for his "daily bread. More than once he arose in the morning with neither money nor bread to supply the wants of his family. . . . Gentle as a woman--but courageous as a lion--undomitable in energy--highly gifted intellectually--an orator by nature--he taxed every talent to the uttermost in the Master's service. . . . He especially attracted me to him--men who had never darkened the doors of churches, walked long distances to hear him and, when there was no room within the little Chapel, stood attentively around the windows and doors. Profound priests saw of him that he was unanswerable as a logician, and that he set forth the truths of Christianity in such a manner that no one could hear him and not believe.[21]

The response of the parish to this man was so strong that the parish purchased a new lot on Jackson Avenue and Plaquemine (now Coliseum) and began construction of a church measuring 110 by 63 feet. After the city of Lafayette was incorporated into the city of New Orleans, on April 27,

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[20] *Records of Trinity Parish*, New Orleans.

[21] *Ibid*.

1853, the church corporation was renamed "Trinity Church, New Orleans."[22]

Public worship was conducted for the first time in the basement of the new church on Easter Sunday, 1853, while the nave was being finished.[23] Dobb never saw the church completed, for that summer a ship arrived in New Orleans carrying yellow fever and the disease spread from the dock causing a major epidemic throughout the city. He contracted the disease while ministering to the sick, and both he and his wife, who also contracted the fever, died and were buried in the churchyard.[24]

After the brief tenure of two other priests, the bishop of the diocese came to Trinity Church as rector on January 1, 1855, and remained there until March of 1860.[25] It was not unusual for bishops to serve as rectors of parishes because the administrative duties of the diocese were comparatively light, and this was often the only means of income. Bishop Polk had supported himself until that time, but beginning in 1849, a series of catastrophes including cholera, yellow fever, early frost, and a tornado had caused unusual debts and forced him to sell his plantation.[26] The diocesan attempt to raise a fund for the support of the episcopate was unsuccessful, so the bishop accepted the rectorship of Trinity Church at a salary of $4,000 per year. He was assisted in his parish duties by a series of curates and the parish showed steady growth until the Civil War when the church was damaged and congregation scattered. Trinity made a remarkable recovery following the War and has grown to be the largest parish in the diocese today.

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[22] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 52.

[23] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 43.

[24] Records of Trinity Parish, New Orleans.

[25] Diocesan Journals, 1855-1860, passim.

[26] William M. Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General (2 vols.; New York, 1915), I, 208.

The northeastern section of the state received some attention from the Episcopal Church in September, 1847, when the Reverend C. S. Hedges commenced his labors there on behalf of the "Ouachita Female Academy."[27] He conducted services for the few communicants and their families at the courthouse and organized a parish under the name of Grace Church. He was followed by Ranney who ministered not only at Monroe but "Prairie Jefferson and Bastrop" in Morehouse Parish.[28] A church was built in 1852 but was destroyed by fire in the same year and Ranney resigned. The parish languished for several years and was reorganized in 1856 but had only a spasmodic ministry until after the Civil War.[29]

Pointe Coupée Parish, located on the Mississippi River and bounded by the Atchafalaya River, the Red River, and False River, contained prime alluvial soil which was excellent for the growing of cotton and sugar cane. Many large plantation owners moved into the area, among whom were Episcopalians known to Bishop Polk. He made a visit to the area in June, 1847, in company with the Reverend A. H. Lamon, and held a service in the home of Mrs. Charles Allen on Bayou Fordoche. A parish was organized under the name of St. Peter's, Morganza.[30]

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[27] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 27.

[28] Diocesan Journal, 1851, 39.

[29] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 70, passim.

In May, 1848, the bishop, accompanied by the Reverend Fathers Lewis, Lemon, and Frederick Dean, conducted a series of services for several days in order to attract the attention of the populace, many of whom were members of the Church.[31] Their efforts bore fruit and the Reverend Frederick Dean was placed in Morganza as minister in charge. Dean was a native son who had been ordained to the diaconate only a few months prior to this.[32] He began conducting regular Sunday liturgies and enough interest was aroused among the people so that "a sufficient amount of means was proffered to erect an edifice."[33]

Meanwhile an active community composed of a number of Episcopal families had developed some twenty-five miles up the Mississippi River at Williamsport, and in November, 1848,

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[30] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 150.

[31] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 10.

[32] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 5.

[33] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 15.

Dean began conducting services there twice each month and organized a mission under the name of St. James.[34] Sarah E. Archer, one of the original members of this parish, recorded her memories of the early visits of this young minister to Williamsport:

> Frederick A. Dean--of Boston (a Deacon) in consequence of having very weak lungs--came south--first in Texas then in Pointe Coupee, La.--teaching--in Judge E. Cooley's family--five miles above and across the river from Bayou Lara--while at Judge Cooley's he held services in a shell of a frame building without sash at Williamsport on the Hopkins' land--built by the neighborhood and used for a school.[35]

Mrs. Archer related that Dean started the twenty-five mile trip on Fridays with a melodeon strapped on the back of the buggy and accompanied by two boys who served as his choir. He would visit the homes of parishioners until Sunday, then set up a box for an altar, vest, and act as minister and organist. Soon two ladies joined his boys and helped sing the chants: "Mr. Dean read the prayers and sang the praises --and explained the scriptures with such elevation--that everyone was impressed with his earnestness and Godliness and to his efforts do we owe St. Stephen's success."[36] Dean began work at the Poydras Academy founded by Julien Poydras and held services near the Pointe Coupee Court House, but his consumption grew worse. He went to Marseilles, France, for treatment, but received no aid and returned to Pointe Coupée where he died. While working in the area he established services also at Bayou Fordoche and Bayou Grosse Tete, thus initiating five sites for future parishes.[37]

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[34] Diocesan Journal, 1848, 6.

[35] "St. Stephen's, Williamsport" by Mrs. E. Archer, 1886. A manuscript in possession of the author.

[36] "St. Stephen's, Williamsport."

The Pointe Coupée missionary program was interrupted soon after it began by Dean's death and by high water which caused crevasses in the levees in 1849 and 1850. Dean's church was reported under construction in 1852, but in November, 1854, the Reverend John Rowland took charge of "St. James" and found that, although the vestry had purchased twenty-six acres of land, the church was not even started. The parish was reorganized under Rowland's leadership in 1855 and adopted the name of "St. Stephen's Church," which had been suggested by Bishop Polk. Vestrymen serving at the time were: Robert W. Boyd, Charles D. Stewart, Edward B. Hopkins, Dr. W. D. Smith, Sr., John G. Archer, B. Coyle, and John Hamilton.[38] The rector reported that a building committee was appointed to construct a church, school, and rectory and that materials were on hand for that project to begin at once.[39] The church was not completed until 1859, but its gothic beauty and surrounding burial ground still stands as a place of worship for the residents of the area. St. Stephen's was admitted to union with the convention of 1855 and was represented by R. W. Boyd.[40]

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[37] Diocesan Journal, 1858, 31.

[38] "St. Stephen's, Williamsport."

[39] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 48.

In 1848 the Reverend C. S. Gedges traveled from Monroe to several locations on Prairie Jefferson, later known as Oak Ridge. In 1851 Ranney established regular services, and the "Church of the Redeemer" was organized in 1856 and a building constructed. The members were, however, few; in 1866 there were twelve white and twenty-five colored, but they were eager to be a part of the diocese and were admitted that year.[41] For over one hundred years this small parish has continued to exist with the same limited membership.

Work was also begun at New Iberia on the Teche in 1848 under the leadership of the Reverend William A. Burton as its first resident priest.[42] Bishop Polk had visited "New Town" in 1844 and noted it as a place for a future parish. He then reported, "I know of no field in the diocese, of the same extent, where a clergyman, particularly if he spoke the French language, could do more good."[43] In 1852 the "Church of the Epiphany" was organized, but it did not become a parish until 1855. A church was built and the parish grew until the Civil War. During that time "the Church was much abused, having been converted into a guard house. The seats were taken out, some of them burnt, the windows mutilated, the walls covered with unbecoming charcoal and pencil sketches and inscriptions."[44]

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[40] Diocesan Journal, 1855, 16.

[41] Diocesan Journal, 1866, 58.

[42] Diocesan Journal, 1849, 14.

[43] Diocesan Journal, 1844, 12.

The General Convention next met at Cincinnati, Ohio, October 2-16, 1850, and Louisiana was represented by clergymen Edmund Neville, A. D. Lamon, N. O. Preston, Amos D. McCoy, and laymen John S. Lobdell and Greer B. Duncan. At these triennial meetings each diocese made reports of progress, and in 1850 the Louisiana deputies made an encouraging report of growth over the past three years.[45] There were twenty-five clergymen in the diocese, several of whom were engaged in the instruction of youth, and one of whom was a chaplain in the bishop's household ministering to slaves and the bishop's family. Nine priests had moved into the diocese and nine had moved out, the total thus remaining the same, but there were five ordinations to the diaconate and seven to the priesthood. During the triennium, three churches were consecrated, 475 persons were confirmed, 2,044 baptized, 607 married, and 1,264 buried. The deputies also reported 559 children under the instruction of 55 teachers and a communicant strength of 941. The amount of diocesan contributions from the parishes had nearly doubled from $5,253 to $10,449.47, indicating a growing diocesan structure. Special attention was called in the report to the work established for seamen, the French-speaking church, and the growing parish schools.

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[44] Diocesan Journal, 1866, 65.

[45] General Convention Journal, 1850, 173.

> On the whole, therefore, the condition of this Diocese must be deemed encouraging, and calls for gratitude to Him who, as the Great Head of the Church, attends with his blessings the labor of his faithful servants for her welfare.[46]

Before the next General Convention met three years later, the bishop had led the diocese to begin work in at least six other communities. It was also during this time that Bishop Polk and other clergy made progress among the slaves and more especially the slave masters and promoted extensive work among the Negroes. The work of founding parishes proceeded, and five of the six parishes established during the next triennium would continue through the Civil War to the present time. They were as follows: Christ Church, Bastrop; Trinity and All Saints, DeSoto; Christ Church, Mansfield; Mount Olivet, Algiers; St. John's, Washington; and St. John's Minden.

Christ Church, Bastrop, began regular parish worship on April 25, 1851, under the leadership of Ranney who was then at Monroe but resigned the following year.[47] Several other clergymen officiated for brief periods of time in Bastrop over the next ten years and on March 16, 1860, the bishop himself organized the parish with the Reverend

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[46] General Convention Journal, 1850, 174.

[47] Diocesan Journal, 1852, passim.

William Miller and T. B. Lawson. The bishop reported,

> During the day I organized a congregation; under circumstances of great promise, the people resolving to make itself supporting from the first, and also to take early measures for erecting a suitable house of worship.[48]

Christ Church was admitted to union with the diocese on May 1, 1861.[49] Bishop Polk made an extensive tour of the northern part of the State of Louisiana before journeying to Sewanee, Tennessee, for the dedication of the first building of the University of the South. He found "an earnest interest in the services of the Church, and an assurance of a desire to have it established among them." The people were prosperous, but were spread thin on large plantations, making it difficult to gather sufficient communicants in a given place to form a parish. Polk noted that the population was increasing and that the time was not far away when the northwestern part of the state would have the most important post in the Diocese.[50]

The Reverend William Scull began his ministry in the northwestern sector of the state in 1850, serving for a time at St. Mark's, Shreveport. His work was temporarily combined with that of Trinity, and DeSoto. He also conducted occasional services in Mansfield, but Christ Church in that town was not formally organized until after the Civil War. Scull devoted the greatest amount of his time to travel, using Shreveport as a center. In addition to visiting the Louisiana stations, he also made excursions into Texas and led worship and instruction for the Negroes on plantations in that area.[51]

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[48] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 18.

[49] Ibid., 12.

[50] Ibid., 18.

The settlement across the river from New Orleans on the west bank is known as Algiers and is a part of the city of New Orleans. One of the founding members of Christ Church, New Orleans, John McDonough, who later endowed the school system of the city of New Orleans, resided there. Each day he rowed across the river to his place of business and on Sundays to his place of worship.[52] There were other members of the Episcopal Church who lived "over the river" but apparently no effort was made to establish a parish there until 1851. In that year the Reverend C. H. Williamson, rector of L'Eglise Francaise, began conducting Prayer Book services there in English each Sunday.[53] The following year Williamson's regular care for this group resulted in the organization of Mount Olivet Church as a legal corporation with a worshiping congregation and a vestry sufficiently active to purchase ground for the construction of a church.[54] The rector reported that this had long been a desire of the people in Algiers but no organized effort was made until the City Missionary Society in New Orleans took a special interest in the area. The congregation, although composed of people from many denominational backgrounds, were interested in and responsive to the liturgy. On April 8, 1853, this parish was united with the convention and has continued until the present time.

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[51] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 58.

[52] Arthur G. Nuhrah, Memorials and Portraits of John McDonough (New Orleans, 1951), 6.

[53] Diocesan Journal, 1852, 60.

[54] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 52.

Napoleonville was a village surrounded by a sugar plantation area close to Bishop Polk's home, and he had held a service there as early as June 25, 1843. There is no further record of work there until the Reverend J. F. Young began his duties there on July 18, 1852.[55] At that time there were only two communicants in the area, but the priest reported that he had located "some twenty families who were favorably disposed toward the establishment of the Church." Since these people had become accustomed to the absence of Sunday opportunities for worship, the response to Young's efforts was not as strong as he had hoped. It was sufficient, however, to organize a parish on January 10, 1853, and ". . . at the same time taking the necessary steps to secure at once the erection of such a Church as will be in some measure appropriate for one of the wealthiest communities in the State to present as an offering to God."[56] The rector reported that he held weekly catechism classes and conducted worship also on two plantations on Sunday afternoons.

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[55] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 53. [56] Ibid., 54.

Plans for Christ Church, Napoleonville, were drawn by the architect Frank Wills of New York, and this small parish still stands as an example of the Victorian Gothic revival in church architecture. The church was constructed on land donated by Dr. E. E. Kittredge, the parish's first senior warden. The junion warden was W. W. Pugh, and the other original vestrymen were G. W. Jones, A. Franklin Pugh, Edmund Pugh, R. Sparks and William Reed Mills.[57] This group led the small congregation to raise $9,500 for the erection of the church so that it was debt free when consecrated on May 18, 1854.[58] Statistics indicate that Negroes outnumbered the whites three to one in the early life of Christ Church, but by 1860 the two races were equally represented in church membership.[59]

The City Missionary Society in New Orleans was active in 1853 when St. Paul's Parish decided to build a new church. Through the generosity of St. Paul's vestry, the old church was given to the society, torn down, and rebuilt piece by piece on a new location at Rampart and Euterpe streets.[60] The new parish was called St. Luke's and was admitted into union with the convention May 1, 1856.[61] In other parts of the diocese small beginnings were also made in Washington and in Minden, the name St. John's being selected in both cases.

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[57] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 178.

[58] Diocesan Journal, 1854, 42.

[59] Ibid., 43; Diocesan Journal, 1860, 43.

[60] Diocesan Journal, 1853, 44.

[61] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 13.

The General Convention met in Trinity Church, New York City, October 5-26, 1853, and the diocese was represented by the Reverend Fathers William T. Leacock, N. O. Preston, C. S. Hedges, and Amos D. McCoy. G. B. Duncan and Charles C. Peck represented the laity.[62] The deputies reported that 26 priests were working in the diocese but two, A. F. Dobb and J. S. Claiborne, had died of yellow fever. There had been only 371 confirmations, of whom 154 were colored, and the total communicant strength was 1,071. The clergy performed 289 marriages and buried 262 persons. Sunday school scholars had jumped from 559 to 1,212 and teachers from 55 to 104. Only three priests had been ordained since 1850--one per year. The deputies reported, however, that all of the statistics were incomplete due to lack of records.[63]

Among the most noteworthy aspects of diocesan life reported to the national church was that all of the clergy in the diocese "preach regularly to the slave population" and gave instruction as well. About 20 such centers existed in the diocese and it was further reported that many others awaited only the arrival of missionaries for churches among the Negroes to begin. The City Missionary Society in New

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[62] General Convention Journal, 1853, 13, 15.

[63] Ibid., 270.

Orleans was commended for starting new parishes and giving financial support to weaker ones until they could extricate themselves from the heavy and unusual debt of building new churches. The deputies lauded the formation of the Protestant Episcopal Association as the trustee of funds for the support of the episcopate, superannuated clergymen, widows and orphans of deceased clergymen, missions, and educational institutions of the diocese.[64]

During the next triennium new parishes were established at the rate of two each year, mostly in the northeastern part of the state. By 1853 there were enough priests at work in the diocese to take over some of the burden of missionary initiative from the bishop. The diocese had grown tenfold since Bishop Polk had become diocesan bishop, and although he did continue to make visitation and did aid and encourage new work, much of the detail was left to the other clergy and the laity. In addition to his diocesan administration, the bishop was also engaged as rector of Trinity Church, New Orleans, and had duties in the House of Bishops.

The Reverend T. R. B. Trader of Thibodaux took the initiative when he began St. Matthew's Church in Houma by holding services there in 1854 and organizing the parish in 1855.[65]

Churches were not only started by the initiative of the clergy. Often the priest came at the invitation of laymen. For example, St. Joseph's Church, Lake St. Joseph, came into being as the result of such an invitation.[66] The Reverend John Philson was ministering in Mississippi opposite Lake St. Joseph when "several gentlemen" asked him "to minister to them in spiritual things." He began the first public services ever held there and shortly organized the parish and assumed full time oversight on January 1, 1856.[67] He reported:

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[64] General Convention Journal, 1853, 270.

[65] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 185.

> I feel assured that this is one of the most important points in the northern part of this Diocese, including, as it does, a rich and highly cultivated region of country and a thickly settled and educated community, which has abundant means of disposal wherwith to honor God and extend His Church.[68]

The priest conducted services in a private home and on the plantations. The name of the parish was subsequently changed to St. Mary's and later to Christ Church.[69]

In the nearby community of Waterproof, another clergyman from Mississippi was called upon for the Prayer Book services. The Reverend James S. Green held occasional services on various plantations, including "The Picanoe Place," owned by Kibb and Shield; Dr. P. F. Young's "St. Peter's"; "Durnago," the estate of Rodney King; Point Place of Mrs. Anna Lee; and the plantation owned by James Wood.[70] This ministry, like so many of the others in the state, was chiefly to the homes of the planters but no plantation statistics are recorded in the journals. If these numbers and others like them were known, the totals undoubtedly would be much larger for Negro communicants than it is. Grace Church was organized in Waterproof and became a parish in 1856. It was represented at the diocesan convention by Dr. T. D. McIlhenny and C. W. Elliot.[71]

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[66] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 59.

[67] Ibid., 60.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Diocesan Journals, 1856-1870, passim.

Mer Rouge, a community in Morehouse Parish, had received some attention from the Reverend F. R. Holeman of Monroe in 1855. This work was combined with Bastrop, and St. Andrew's did not form a parish until 1866.[72] Another hundred years passed before a resident priest was placed in Mer Rouge and the parish was separated from that of Bastrop.[73]

By 1854 Grace Parish in St. Francisville, which was the second parish to be formed in the diocese, furnished direction to a second prospective parish. In that year the assistant rector, Cobb Dowe, gathered a congregation for a chapel on Little Bayou Sara. His efforts were successful and a Gothic chapel was designed by Frank Wills of New York.

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[70] Diocesan Journal, 1856, 53. [71] Ibid., 13.

[72] Diocesan Journal, 1866, 19.

[73] Diocesan Journal, 1867, 50.

Funds were subscribed and St. Mary's Church was begun.[74] Within a few years the Church was built and St. Mary's was fully organized as a parish.[75] The congregation has since merged with the parish at Grace Church, St. Francisville, but the lovely chapel still stands on the road leading from United States Highway 61 to the State Prison at Angola.

St. Luke's Church in Philadelphia was host for the October, 1856, meeting of the General Convention. Louisiana had a full deputation of bishop, clergy and laity. The Reverend Fathers William R. Leacock, Charles Goodrich, R. W. Trader, and Daniel S. Lewis represented the clerical order, and William Goodrich, George S. Fuion, John L. Lobdell, and James R. Chambers the laity.[76] These deputies reported briefly to the national church the following statistics: clergy 32, parishes 39, baptisms 2,373, confirmations 559, communicants 1,421, Sunday school scholars 1,287, teachers 65, ordinations 5, new churches 4, and total diocesan contributions $45,000.[77] This was solid growth for the three years reported, and the diocese by 1856 had reached a point of size and resources where it could function independently of outside support and could contribute to projects outside the diocese. In that year Bishop Polk gave considerable attention to his proposed university at Sewanee. In spite of his prolonged absence, the diocese developed sufficient organizations and resources to care for its regular needs and begin new work as well.

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[74] Diocesan Journal, 1857, 57.

[75] Diocesan Journal, 1858, 14.

[76] General Convention Journal, 1856, 12, 15.

[77] Ibid., 247.

The bishop proudly reported that the rural clergy were caring for the spiritual needs of the slaves, that a number of the clergy even gave their full time to the effort, Sunday schools were functioning on 30 plantations, and St. Thomas' Church for free persons of color had been founded in New Orleans. Again, the bishop bespoke his conscience regarding the institution of slavery. Although he never defended it as such, he was constrained to mention his work and that of his diocese among the Negroes.[78]

In the years prior to the Civil War, parishes of some permanency were begun in eight other places in the diocese, but none of them had any real growth before the War. One of these was Grace Church on the Atchafalaya River in the northern part of Pointe Coupée Parish, which was started by the Reverend Robert F. Clote with fifteen communicants, and a large colored congregation.[79] Clote reported that he used the 39 Articles as a basis of his Sunday school instruction.[80] Anyone who has read these articles would assume there was a considerable sophistication on the part of his scholars or that they were totally unillumined, probably the latter. A church was built, but it was destroyed by the Union Army on its retreat from the Battle of Mansfield.

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[78] General Convention Journal, 1856, 247.

[79] Diocesan Journal, 57.

The rector of St. James', Alexandria, formed a number of new parishes out of his primary charge. The missionary-minded A. D. McCoy took advantage of every opportunity to extend the Church's boundaries. The first such extension came when he, in 1856, fitted a room at a cost of $250.00 and inaugurated monthly services in the community of Cheneyville.[81] After two years of such ministry, Trinity Church was organized and by January 1, 1861, a substantial brick church in Gothic style had been constructed to seat 170 persons, and it was consecrated that day. Trinity's first confirmation was held on April 7, 1861, when 12 white and 31 Negroes were presented by the rector, the Reverend B. E. Mowar.[82]

"The Church of the Holy Nativity," Rosedale, took on life about Christmas of 1858 when the Reverend John Philson initiated regular services rotating the location from A. M. Dickenson's plantation to the Presbyterian Church. The parish was organized on April 16, 1859, with Joseph B. Woolfolk as senior warden, John S. Whitney, Jr., as junior warden, and Jesse Hart, Theodore Johnson, and Henry R. Slack as vestrymen.[83] An arpent of land was given by Dr. George W. Campbell and a gothic chapel of wood was erected and completely furnished with sacramental and eucharistic vessels and vestments, organ, and clergy vestments.[84] The church was consecrated on April 22, 1860, and still is used every Sunday as a House of Worship. In its first year it had 61 Negro members and 13 white children in Sunday school. In addition to his parish duties, Philson established work on several plantations.[85] However, he found that some plantation owners were unwilling to have a priest teach and lead the Negroes in worship, and, therefore, he suspended some of that work. Calvary Church was organized in Livonia, near Rosedale, but later combined with The Nativity.

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[80] "The Thirty Nine Articles" are found as an appendix in The Book of Common Prayer. They were written in the heat of sixteenth century controversies and reflect the theological battles of the day. Anglicans no longer subscribe to the articles, but to the faith of the undivided Catholic Church as it is found in the Scriptures, Creeds, and liturgies. In the nineteenth century the articles were frequently used as a catechism.

[81] Diocesan Journal, 1857, 51.

[82] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 56.

Calvary Church, New Orleans, was organized on the corner of Prytania and Conery streets and a church built in 1860. The Reverend John Fulton became rector but in 1862 was forced to leave New Orleans by the Union Army. Christ Church purchased this parish and used it for worship in 1885 when the mother church was moving from Canal Street and building its present new facilities on St. Charles Avenue.[86] Another parish, Emmanuel Church, Jefferson City, was organized in November, 1860, on Magazine Street but was discontinued by the military authorities. Its main significance is that it later became St. George's Church on St. Charles Avenue, which is still a strong parish of the diocese.

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[83] Diocesan Journal, 1859, 15.

[84] Diocesan Journal, 1860, 38. [85] Ibid., 39.

The last report to be made to the General Convention before the Civil War came at the national gathering of Episcopalians in St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia, from October 5th to 22nd, 1859. Louisiana again had a full clerical and lay representation in the Reverend Fathers Leacock, Hedges, Trader and Guion, and Lobdell, William N. Mercer, G. S. Guion, and P. A. Cleveland.[87] The delegates reported a total of 35 clergy at work in the diocese in 42 parishes and an unspecified number of plantation chapels; five churches were consecrated during the triennium and six new parishes founded. The bishop confirmed 737 persons; there were 2,963 baptisms, 751 marriages, 543 burials, 1,455 Sunday School students, 141 teachers, 1,667 communicants, and $49,805.37 was given for diocesan purposes.[88] Neither the bishop nor the deputies were wholly pleased with the progress. The slowness with which the Church moved was due, they believed,

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[86] Duncan, Diocese of Louisiana, 207.

[87] General Convention Journal, 1859, 17, 19.

[88] General Convention Journal, 1859, 286.

> . . . mainly if not entirely, to the lack of educational institutions in which the distinctive features of the Church are clearly set forth and prominently inculcated, so as to counteract that laxity of opinion so extensively prevalent in regard to the clearly-defined and binding character of positive religious duty, and conformity to religious ordinances.[89]

The bishop's solution to the problem was to found the University of the South whose graduates would "infuse a tone of healthy sentiment into our whole church and community calculated to correct the lax and ill-defined notions prevalent and which are subsersive of all rule, authority, and good government."[90]

Clearly the bishop felt that enlightened churchmen would be a leaven in society which would solve the social ills of his day. He took his place among Southern leaders both by founding the university and by accepting the Confederacy as the only solution he could see to the nation's ills.

During his episcopate, which was soon to end, he had ordained 16 deacons and 19 priests; confirmed 3,817 persons; and increased the number of church buildings from 3 to 33, parishes from 6 to 80, communicants from 222 to 1,859, and clergy from 6 to 32.[91]

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[89] General Convention Journal, 1859, 287.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Diocesan Journals, 1841-1861, passim.

# CHAPTER XVII

# SECESSION OF THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA

Historians have expressed greatly divergent views on the cause or causes of the conflict which raged in America from 1861 to 1865. Some have found political roots and others economic differences between the sections and others have tried to find a "devil" behind one or the other side in the conflict. If there is any agreement, it is that the institution of slavery in the Southern states was an important and even central factor which led to disunion and war.[1]

Slavery had long been an issue for the American people, and following the Missouri Compromise, agitation to abolish the institution began. In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison founded the Liberator as an organ of crusade against slavery, and soon a full-scale campaign was underway.[2] The Compromise of 1850 failed to provide a permanent solution to the nation's divisive problem, which was further aggravated by a series of events during the 1850's. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, was published, and was widely read in the North, and was accepted by many as a condemnation of slavery and of the South. In 1854 the Republican Party was formed as a political instrument to control the spread of slavery into the territories.

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[1] John Higham (ed.), The Reconstruction of American History (New York, 1962), 98-118.

[2] Louis Fuller, Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York, 1960), 19.

In 1857 the Supreme Court Decision on the runaway slave Dred Scott aroused the ire of Northern abolitionists, and the following year the Lincoln-Douglas debates widened the growing split by crystallizing public opinion. John Brown's raid and rumors of Negro insurrection set the scene for an emotional campaign in 1860, and Abraham Lincoln's election later signaled the death knell for slavery.

Public opinion in Louisiana during the winter of 1860-1861 was divided between those who desired immediate secession and those who favored a wait-and-see attitude until President Lincoln announced his policy. On January 26, 1861, an Ordinance of Secession was voted favorably 113 to 17 and President Mouton of the Louisiana Convention declared Louisiana an independent power.[3] This act was greeted with approval by many, perhaps a majority, of Louisiana citizens, and none among them gave stronger endorsement than did Leonidas Polk, Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana.

During the period of great agitation on the slavery issue in the ante-bellum era the unity of several large churches was sundered, but the Episcopal Church avoided a split by evading discussion of the issue. Yet when secession of the Southern states took place, Bishop Polk followed the lead of the state. It was also an Anglican principle that churches be organized along national lines. Polk not only accepted the Anglican principle of obedience of the church to state sovereignty but he held the personal view of a States-righter.[4] He responded affirmatively to the events of December, 1860-February, 1861, but it is clear from his actions that his thinking on the question of slavery and secession was determined before circumstances forced him to make critical decisions.

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[3] Edwin A. Davis, Louisiana, A Narrative History (Baton Rouge, 1961), 248.

The first of a series of responses to national conditions from the Bishop of Louisiana came when President James Buchanan issued a proclamation calling for a national day of prayer, fasting, and humiliation in view of the political differences which were undermining the Union. Bishop Polk issued a pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the diocese on December 29, including a prayer he composed for the day appointed "and at such other times as may seem advisable during the existing emergency."[5] The prayer was as follows:

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[4] William S. Slack, "Diocesan Episcopate in Louisiana," _Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church_, VII, No. 4 (December, 1938), 367.

[5] _Journal of the Twenty-Third Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Louisiana_, Held in Grace Church, St. Francisville, on the First and Second Days of May, 1861 (New Orleans, 1861), 29. Hereinafter cited as _Diocesan Journal_.

> Oh Almighty God, the Fountain of all wisdom, and the Helper of all who call upon Thee: We, thy unworthy servants, under a deep sense of the difficulties and dangers by which we are now surrounded, turn our hearts to Thee in earnest supplication and prayer. We humble ourselves before Thee; we confess that as a nation and as individuals, we have grievously offended Thee; and that our sins have justly provoked thy wrath and indignation against us. Deal not with us, Oh Lord, according to our iniquities, but according to thy great and tender mercies, and forgive us all that is past. Turn thine anger from us, and visit us not with those evils we most justly have deserved. Guide and direct us in all our consultations; save us from all ignorance, error, pride, and prejudice; and if it please thee, compose and heal the divisions which disturb us. Or else, if in thy good providence it be otherwise appointed, grant, we beseech Thee, that the spirit of wisdom and moderation may preside over our councils, that the just rights of all may be maintained and accorded, and the blessings of peace preserved to us and our children throughout all generations. All which we ask through the merits and meditation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The prayer is interesting for what it reveals of Bishop Polk's attitude at the time. It was first an acknowledgment of national or corporate sin as well as of individual sins. If the institution of slavery was wrong, then the entire nation was to blame and should assume responsibility. This issue was splitting the nation and the prayer asked that the animosities be healed. But, he submitted, "if in thy good providence it be otherwise appointed," then let the rights of both sides be maintained and peace be allowed to prevail. Clearly he was praying that the North allow the South the right to maintain its traditions and institutions.

On January 26, 1861, the State of Louisiana seceded from the United States of America, and Bishop Polk wrote his thoughts on this matter in his diary under the same date.[6] He also issued a pastoral letter to the diocese on January 30, 1861, giving his rationale for his position of independence. His diary records that "the State of Louisiana, in exercise of her indefeasible [sic] rights" severed her connections with the United States and became an independent sovereignty. Of the right of a state to secede from the union he seemed to have had no doubt whatsoever, and this makes clear his view of a strong legal approach to states rights.[7] In his eyes the supreme authority in Louisiana ceased to be the United States and became that of the State. He also revealed his second view on the Constitutional provision on the relationship between Church and State. Although Polk did not believe in legally established religion, he felt that the duty of churchmen was "the recognition of that change, in the forms in which the Founder of our Holy Religion required his followers to recognize de facto governments."[8] Hence because of a change of government, the bishop reasoned, the church had an absolute duty to shift its civil allegiance and alter its form of worship if necessary. Civil governments change from time to time, and the church as a Divine Institution should support these governments which also may be considered of Divine origin. "Hence arises the duty of the Church, on the occurrence of any established form of government, to alter her formularies, so as to make them conform to the new condition of things."[9]

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[6] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 19-24.

[7] Ibid., 20.

[8] Ibid.

In this latter assertion Polk ran into a peculiar difficulty because he realized that certain changes would have to be made in the Book of Common Prayer. Prayers containing intercessions for the President of the United States, which, with the separation of Louisiana from the union, would no longer be applicable. Yet, under the Constitution of the Episcopal Church, a bishop had no authority to make changes in the Prayer Book, as this was reserved to General Convention. What was he to do?

> A conflict arose between the duty we, as a Diocese, owe to the provisions of a Constitution which bound us to pray for the Rulers of one Government, and the duty we owed to the Law of Christ Himself, which required us to pray for those of another.[10]

He reasoned that a higher law must be followed even at the expence of repudiating the constitution of the church. He took this action on his own authority without reference to the diocesan convention and felt justified in so doing because as a strong bishop, with a clear understanding of the proper exercise of episcopal prerogatives, he was assured of popular support.

He issued a pastoral letter on January 20, setting forth and directing certain alterations in the Book of Common Prayer and, in the absence of constitutional authority, he appealed to history. Not unlike the justification offered in the secession of the states, he believed that the Church in Louisiana existed prior to its adherence to the Constitution of the American Church and union with the General Convention. But, in "accepting the constitutional connection which was thus established, our Diocese did not intend to impose upon herself impossible obligations, which in any future contingency would conflict with her duties to Christ." As precedent for this he again pleaded that historically the "normative conditions of the Dioceses of the Catholic Church is that of separate Independence. A departure from that condition has been the fruit of expediency only.[11]

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[9] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 20.

[10] Ibid., 21.

Having discarded the unity of the American Church, he then appealed for the maintenance of this principle in the Confederate States. As senior bishop he addressed a circular letter to other Southern bishops to meet at Montgomery, Alabama, on July 3, 1861, to "consult upon such matters of interest to the Church as have arisen out of the changes in our civil affairs with the view of securing uniformity and harmony of action."[12]

Following that long entry in his journal, the bishop recorded his usual business of visits to parishes, building of churches, and other episcopal acts without further reference to the change of status. In other words, he saw no need for alteration in church life, belief, worship, or discipline.[13]

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[11] *Ibid.*, 22. [12] *Ibid.*, 24. [13] *Ibid.*, 26-28.

The pastoral letter of January 30, 1861, was addressed "To the Clergy and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Louisiana."[14] Its purpose was to justify Bishop Polk's action in substituting "Governor of this State" for the words "President of the United States" in certain prayers. Also altered was the prayer for Congress to that of the State Legislature. His arguments were more cogent than those put down in the diary and can be summarized:

> 1. The secession of Louisiana resulted in an independent diocese since the Church is coterminious with the state.
>
> 2. The Church in the non-slaveholding states was commended for "her sound conservative teaching and well-ordered organization" and her refusal to lend her conventions, pulpits, and press to abolitionism.
>
> 3. Withdrawal from the American Church was done with sorrow and constituted no break of unity with but only a political division.
>
> 4. Separation came because the Church followed nationality "not because there has been any difference of opinion as to Christian Doctrine or Catholic usage."[15]

Bishop Polk here suggested that he was following another historical precedent. When the American Colonies became independent of England, the Church of England in the former colonies formed an independent national church, but continued in communion with the mother church in doctrine, discipline, and worship. Hence he concluded the Church in Louisiana would continue in communion with the American

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[14] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 30-32.

[15] Ibid., 32.

Church under the same beliefs and worship but under different local administration.

Subsequent to the passage of the Ordinance of Secession, Louisiana was a "Republic" for nearly two months before, on March 31, 1861, she joined the Confederate States.[16] Bishop Polk anticipated this move, and on February 20, 1861, he issued a circular letter to the diocese in which he again abridged the Prayer Book, this time to substitute "the President of the Confederate States" for "Governor of this state" and "the Congress of the Confederate States" for "the Convention of the Southern States."[17] His concern in that letter was solely with the disposition of funds which had been collected for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. He explained that his purpose in the letter of January 30th was simply to declare the status of the diocese as a consequence of a change in nationality. His major aims in doing this were to declare by what authority he could authorize changes in the liturgy. The former letter also had anticipated the merging of Louisiana with other states into a new Confederacy.

> . . . it did not undertake to decide whether a Union of the Diocese within the seceded States with those in the United States, from which they were separated, would, under any form, be "impracticable." . . . It drew a distinction in Legislature, whether Constitutional or Canonical, and Unity, in Christian Doctrine and Catholic usage.[18]

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[16] Davis, Narrative History, 250.

[17] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 34-36.

[18] Ibid., 34.

He further explained that Christian unity surpassed all national boundaries and cannot be broken by political differences and that continuing unity of the Church, North and South, was possible. However, since a Confederation of States was being formed, Bishop Polk realized that common sense required the organization of the church in that union while continuing some degree of unity with the church in the North. Therefore, in regard to the funds collected for missions he recommended "that such funds as may have been, or may hereafter be, collected for those objects he sent forward as heretofore."[19]

The Twenty-third Annual Convention of the Diocese of Louisiana met in Grace Church, St. Francisville, on May 1-2, 1861, and proceeded with its normal business following a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The regular statements were made on the status of parish life, new parishes, finances and annual audits. The only unusual report was one on the "State of the Church" presented by the Reverend John Fulton, which was a lengthy explanation of the status of the diocese and their recommendation to the convention.[20]

The report is a scholarly exposition of polity approached from a historical perspective and can be summarized: He argued that the Diocese of Louisiana is a part of the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church, and only heresy or schism can destroy that unity. "This unity no mere political or National disturbances or revolutions can destroy, and this Bond cannot be impaired by any changes among States or Nations."[21]

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[19] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 36. [20] Ibid., 39.

With regard to the church, ". . . Unity among Churches are altogether different from the Unity of the Church," hence the Louisiana schism was not a breach but a temporary separation. From ancient times ". . . it appears from the tenor of Holy Scriptures, and the testimony of ancient authors, that every Diocese was originally independent of every other." That is, the basic structure of the church is diocesan and the unity of groups of dioceses was for expediency and by free consent. With the breakdown of the Roman Empire the patriarchal system was merged into a national system and churches became identified with nations, largely for the sake of liturgical uniformity. At the same time the central authority of Rome was being extended over national churches. The papacy suppressed the national principle in favor of universal jurisdiction of the pope. This centralization was reversed in the sixteenth century when the Reformation restored national sovereignty to the Church of England. The principle of an autonomous national church came with the Church of England to the Colonies. Colonial independence led to a national Church organization in the United States of America. Furthermore the corporate title,

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[21] _Diocesan Journal_, 1861, 40.

"The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" indicated only those dioceses in the United States were to be included. Since Louisiana was no longer a part of the United States, the Diocese of Louisiana was ipso facto an independent diocese. In response to this argument the following resolutions to the convention carried:

> Whereas, The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, is and was rightly intended to be a strictly National body, not admitting into union with it Dioceses situated in foreign countries;
>
> And Whereas, The State of Louisiana has by ordinance dissolve the Union formerly existing between it and the United States of America, thereby making the state of Louisiana foreign to the United States; therefore,
>
> Resolved, That the Diocese of Louisiana has ceased to be a Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.
>
> But Whereas, The universal experience of the Catholic Church has from a very early time shown the necessity of such local combinations among Dioceses as might advance the common welfare,
>
> And Whereas, Reasons of the highest expediency demand that the Church should in this respect follow the Nationalities which in the order of Divine Providence may be raised up, therefore
>
> Resolved, That the Diocese of Louisiana loyal to the Doctrine, Discipline and Example of the Holy Catholic Church, and, closely following the model of our Mother Church of England, and our Sister Diocese in the United States, is desirous of entering into Union with the remaining Dioceses of the Confederate States for the formation of a National Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America.
>
> Resolved Further, That this Convention will appoint Delegates to represent the Diocese in a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate

> States of America, to be held at Montgomery, in the State and Diocese of Alabama, on the 3rd day of July next.[22]

The meeting of the various dioceses in the Confederate States had been the subject of a circular written by Bishop Polk and Bishop Stephen Elliot of Georgia on March 23, 1861.[23] Bishop Polk and Elliot took the leadership in proposing to the Southern dioceses confederation of the Church in the South.

As a result, many of these states met and formed a union of the independent dioceses into the Confederate Church, but the Diocese of Louisiana was never to be a part of that organization, for on June 22, 1861, Bishop Leonidas Polk accepted a commission as a Major General in the Provisional Army of the Confederacy, and with his departure the corporate life of the Diocese of Louisiana came to a halt.[24] Although an effort was made to have a convention in May, 1862, it failed for lack of a quorum. It was not until the ravaged South began to rebuild in 1866 that the Louisiana Diocese under the leadership of Joseph Pere Bell Wilmer revived.

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[22] Diocesan Journal, 1861, 47.

[23] Proceedings of a Meeting of Bishops, Clergymen, and Laymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States at Montgomery, and Alabama, on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th of July, 1861 (Montgomery, 1861), 3.

[24] Joseph Parks, General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A. (Baton Rouge, 1962), 168.

# CHAPTER XVIII

# EPILOGUE

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase the Episcopal Church did not exist in Louisiana; by 1861 there were parishes to be found in every populated area of the State. When the War Between the States began, it was fully organized into a functioning diocesan system under the leadership of an able bishop. It had developed a structure sufficient to carry out its work, and had responded to areas of special need, such as the creation of schools and a special ministry for Negroes.

In 1805 there were less than 50 people who had expressed an interest in joining the Episcopal Church, but by 1861 there were 1,859 communicants (and approximately 3,000 other baptized members) who worshipped in 46 parishes under a bishop and 32 priests. The growth of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana compared well with that in other Southern dioceses. In 1859, for example, the state had 42 parishes, while Mississippi had 35, Texas 24, and Alabama 37. There were 35 priests in Louisiana, against 31 in Mississippi, 31 in Alabama, and 12 in Texas. Communicant strength in Louisiana was 1,667, Mississippi had 1,400, Alabama 1,673, and Texas 700.[1] In comparison with other Protestant groups in the State, the Episcopal Church showed up well. The Presbyterian church began organized work in 1819 and by 1861 had established Presbyteries in three areas of Louisiana, although it did not organize these local groups into a state-wide synod until 1900.[2] In 1861 there were 11 Presbyterian ministers working in 17 organized churches. Methodism was first introduced into Louisiana in 1805 by Elisha W. Bowman, who found himself so unpopular with the members of the newly-founded Episcopal Church that he moved on to Attakapa Country.[3] Consequently, by 1810 there were only 43 members of the Methodist Church in the entire Orleans Territory who were served by a succession of preachers on a "circuit" system of constant travel. Churches were gradually established and organized into the Louisiana Conference on January 6, 1847, at Opelousas.[4] By 1860 the number of Methodist preachers had grown to 18. The Episcopal Church had gotten an earlier start and, at least in terms of clergy and congregations, it was stronger than either of the two other leading Protestant Churches. Because of its colonial heritage of the 18th century, the Roman Church remained the dominant group.

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[1] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Assembled* in a General Convention, Held in St. Paul's Church, in the City of Richmond, From October 5th to October 22d, Inclusive in the Year of our Lord, 1859 (Philadelphia, 1860), 271-91.

[2] Penrose St. Amant, *A History of the Presbyterian Church in Louisiana* (Richmond, 1961), 161.

[3] Robert H. Harper, *Louisiana Methodism* (Washington, 1949), 5-6.

[4] *Ibid*., 170.

The first rector, Philander Chase, found himself confronted with diverse Protestants from various traditions who wanted only an "English speaking church." He went to great pains to transform that group into a legally constituted Episcopal Church, even writing an "Article of Agreement" and amending the constitution with his own hand to assure it. The faulty wording of the Canon of 1832,which called Louisiana Episcopalians "clergy and Churches,"was particularly offensive to them because it violated their tradition of organized religion as a "diocese." Once an ecclesiastical unit was formed in 1838, with episcopal oversight coming the following year, their concern with proper structures shifted to a need for mission.

Structural growth did not cease, however, with the arrival of Leonidas Polk in 1842 as Bishop of Louisiana. Perhaps the long struggle for diocesan status and episcopacy placed undue emphasis on organization. The process of creating a basic structure for diocese continued under the Bishop's leadership, with permanent results.

The primary instrument of organization was the annual convention presided over by the bishop. The convention itself was composed of an unusually large number of committees. At times every member of the convention served on one or more of these committees. The convention created the missionary and education committees which concerned themselves with many programs. It created also numerous financial and standing committees dealing with the convention as an organized group. Since the membership of the Episcopal Church was never more than 5,000 (including a small but undetermined number of Negroes), the concern with organization produced a structure too unwieldy and cumbersome for its program and mission activities. In its original form the convention provided the machinery for the trial of a clergyman before a diocese existed or any priest had been appointed. This was simply overemphasis on organization, carried into a new diocese for no other reason than it had been necessary in other places at other times. In reality, a structure that was needed was the missionary organization which formed in the first years of diocesan life. It failed to function well since it called rallies at convention time but produced no missions. Hence special organizations, such as the City Missionary Society in New Orleans, made up of local people, and the national Domestic Committee of Missions were called upon to initiate work with the dispatch of missionaries to the diocese. The Domestic Committee sent several priests to Louisiana but was eventually entangled in a jurisdictional dispute with the bishop, which decreased its effectiveness.

In one sense however, the diocesan structure was effective: through the bishop and convention the diocese created a center which made possible a sense of family life in the Church. The convention provided an opportunity for clergy and laity to share in developing the Church in Louisiana. Both groups came to know each other as people and worked well together for the objectives of the diocese. The leadership of this group came naturally from the bishop to whom should be credited many of the successes and failures.

Bishop Polk was a strong, authoritarian leader who gave precise direction to his people. He was firm in his will to carry out his desired programs but gentle in his personal relationships. He was physically robust and energetic, and hence personally conducted much of the mission program of the diocese. His thinking was molded unduly by sectional and personal interests. While he was personally committed to a ministry to the slaves, there is little evidence to support his son and biographer's contention that he believed in gradual emancipation. (He did indicate, however, such a posture in some of his writings, as well as in his constant ministry to the Negroes.) He made a surrender to slavocracy when he joined the Confederate forces; yet he was undoubtedly sincere in his plea that he did it for the slaves' benefit.

Polk's grasp of theology was inadequate, as was his knowledge of polity and history. He defended his secession of the diocese from the Episcopal Church, but his arguments gave the impression that his position was taken ex post facto.

It was not necessary for him to take that action at all, but he acted because his political loyalty was entirely on the side of the Confederacy. He used his office to give church approval to state secession. It was not incumbent upon him to leave his diocese without leadership in order to become a Confederate general. His loyalty to the South convinced him that he could better serve the cause in the army than as a bishop. When he took the diocese out of the General Convention, he felt free to leave it without discipline. His brother bishops did discuss disciplinary action against him during the War but his untimely death prevented actual proceedings.

His defense of the act of secession was logical and well executed. Given his premise that the church must be organized along national lines, his arguments are sound, but historically the assumption is inaccurate. It is true that the Church has often been and still is organized along national lines, but this does not mean that it has to be. The Church of Ireland, for example, includes Erie as well as Northern Ireland, and, there are numerous other historical examples of warring nations belonging to the same ecclesiastical body. The Church as a reconciling body could have provided a vehicle of unity for the North and South, which was needed to a greater degree when the South seceded than ever before. Hence, Polk's act of ecclesiastical secession removed one of the few possible agents of reconciliation in existence at that vital moment.

Polk asserted that his procedure meant no break of communion with his Northern brethren but only one of organization. To carry the organizational separation to its logical conclusion, he issued a call to his brother Southern bishops for ecclesiastical unity. This coordination functioned during the war but collapsed after the peace, and Southern Episcopalians rejoined their Northern brethren once again in a common body.

Louisiana Presbyterians and Methodists made even stronger stands for slavery _qua_ slavery than did Polk. In contrast to the Episcopal Bishop, these groups actually defended slavery as an institution. They had also worked among the slaves but never as extensively or consistently as did Polk. Although the Civil War brought about a permanent division for the Methodists and Presbyterians from the Northern Church, their Confederate organization continued to exist after the War. This did not happen to the Episcopal Church. It was saved from this by several factors. The first was the great friendship which existed between bishops, North and South. Although Bishop Polk's decision to enter the Confederacy brought disagreement with his fellow clergymen, they continued on good terms. The Bishop of Maine expressed his warm personal sympathy toward Polk throughout the War. Furthermore, the episcopal system by its very nature stressed unity, and once the conflict was over, churchmen returned to their accustomed ways of working together in the General Convention. The sentiment that had brought the Southern dioceses into a single group disappeared with the collapse of the Confederacy.

In the ante-bellum Diocese of Louisiana there was one important area of need which the Church tried to fill, namely, education. Episcopal clergy and laity, who were generally well educated, felt obliged to provide educational facilities, at least for their own children. At the instigation of Bishop Polk,the diocesan convention of 1844 resolved to establish schools within every parish. The tradition of such schools went back to the first priest in Louisiana, Philander Chase,in 1805. The idea took root and owing to Polk's persistence the University of the South was founded at Sewanee, Tennessee. This was certainly one of Polk's greatest contributions to his Church and to his section, far greater than his service in the Confederate Army.

Polk was the first bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana and served for over twenty years. He was personally responsible for the construction of thirty or so parish churches, some of which are still in regular use. He created a tradition of vigorous, decisive leadership which made possible a rebuilding of the diocese after the War. Most of the administrative and fiscal organizations remained intact and were revived after the War.

The development of the Diocese of Louisiana from its organization in 1805 until its secession in 1861 is but a segment of Louisiana and American history. Yet this segment affords a partial view of the social history of the antebellum South. This group, like the Methodists and Presbyterians, sought to adapt its institution to the environment. Special work was undertaken among the various language groups because there was a distinct need. Seaman's Mission activity came into existence because seamen were there. The church submitted to slaveocracy and in this case became a follower rather than a leader. This was perhaps not inevitable, but the church was small and its members were slaveholders.

There is no evidence that the Episcopal Church in Louisiana had any relationship whatsoever with the Roman Church. This communion had been in Louisiana from the earliest days of settlement, and it has remained the major religious body in the southern part of the State. As the Episcopal diocese gained strength, it ceased to be an island in a foreign culture and began to influence domestic life. Polk's decision to become a planter was aimed at making his ministry relevant to the economic life of the State as well as the practical necessity of earning a living. Yet he was identified with the planter aristocracy rather than with the plain people who continued to be members of the Roman Church. The Episcopal Church appealed to "the most respected Americans" in New Orleans and it was to this group that the Church in Louisiana extended its mission. Slaves were included because they depended upon the plantation owners, but the small landowners, generally non-slaveowners, and artisans were left untouched. In this respect the mission of the Episcopal Church in Louisiana was not unlike that in its sister states. In Alabama, for example, it developed essentially the same structures and programs as Louisiana, with slaveowners and slaves but to few outside this circle.[5]

The Episcopal Church was the first non-Roman communion to develop an ecclesiastical organization in the newly-acquired Territory of Orleans. Although the Spanish government had permitted the exercise of religion by Protestants, its tolerant attitude did not include permission to create structures for that purpose. Not until the area came under American control were such efforts made by the Episcopal Church and others. Once established, the Diocese of Louisiana expanded work into all areas of Louisiana. Under the able leadership of Bishop Polk it was sufficiently strengthened so that it survived the Civil War and has continued to the present day.

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[5] Robert C. Whitaker, History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Alabama, 1763-1791 (Birmingham, 1898), 98ff.

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# VITA

Robert Campbell Witcher was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on October 5, 1926, the third child of Charles Swanson Witcher and Lily Sebastian Campbell. He was educated in the public schools of Orleans Parish, and attended Tulane University prior to entering the United States Navy as an aviation cadet on January 20, 1944. Following World War II he returned to Tulane and graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1949. He then entered Seabury Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, and was awarded a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1952. He has also earned a Master of Arts degree with a major in History and a minor in Geography at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, where he is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. He is a member of the National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Eta Sigma Phi (Classics), and Phi Alpha Theta (History).

He was ordered Deacon on July 6, 1952, by the Right Reverend Girault M. Jones, Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana, and ordained to the priesthood by the Right Reverend Iveson B. Noland, Suffragan Bishop of Louisiana, on June 11, 1953. He has served parishes of the Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge area, as Canon Pastor of Christ Church Cathedral in

New Orleans, and is presently rector of St. James' Church in Baton Rouge. He is president of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Louisiana, a deputy to General Convention, an examining chaplain, and serves in the Naval reserve as a chaplain with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. He is also a trustee of the University of the South and of Seabury Western Theological Seminary.

He is married to the former Elisabeth Alice Cole of Lettsworth, Louisiana, and has two children, Elisabeth Alice and Robert Campbell, Jr.

## EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: ROBERT CAMPBELL WITCHER

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN LOUISIANA, 1805-1861

Approved:

J. Preston Moore
Major Professor and Chairman

R D Anderson
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

J. L. Loos

T. H. Williams

J D Hardy Jr

Fred Kniffen

Date of Examination:

December 17, 1968